JUSTICE THROUGH SERVICE: AN ACTION INQUIRY

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy in Management Studies
at the
University of Waikato

by

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University of Waikato
2004

Abstract

Through 2000 and 2001, I undertook an action research project with a group of staff in a church-affiliated social service agency in Aotearoa New Zealand. The purpose of the action inquiry was to work with the staff in the Agency during the establishment of a residential service for women and their children. In particular, the action inquiry involved working with the staff as they enacted their mission for 'justice through service' and their vision for 'empowering women'.

As a researcher I drew on an epistemology of feminist post-structuralism, using particularly the concept of discursivity, as developed by French social theorist Michel Foucault and others. Much of the research came to be about reflecting with the Director of the Agency and other staff, on the ways a cluster of powerful discourses of Western individualism and neoliberalism, and closely associated managerialism, human rights and psychology, were threaded through their social service work in this country at that time.

Many of the conversations, workshops and processes that emerged came to be about the ways in which managerial and psychological discourses seemed to provide dominant discourses within which social service and social justice work could be imagined and conducted. A number of us came to see an associated liberal discourse of human rights as being the site of considerable injustice for some women and children. We particularly noted the limited subject positions available to women discursively positioned as 'bad, sad or mad'.

One of the most significant steps in the inquiry was to open up the possibility with the staff of thinking and acting differently, of challenging truth and knowledge claims. The action of the research came to be the intentional development of a local discourse of resistance, based on principles of connection, communion, conversation, bicultural development, inquiry, solidarity, participation, action and reflection, and reflexivity. These principles drew on discourses of Christianity and feminist theology, communitarianism and the discourse of action research itself. Social justice became imagined and enacted

as resistance to neoliberalism, sometimes within the discourse of neoliberalism itself, sometimes through the invocation of an alternative discourse. Action research could and sometimes did provide that alternative. Provoking resistance to neoliberalism included creating and maintaining alternative subject positions for both staff members and the women they worked with.

A number of theoretical questions emerged particularly around the intersections and tensions between feminist theory, post-structural theory, and action research. These questions led me to explore the potential and risks for action research to make truth-claims embedded within a neoliberal framework, particularly through invocations of first person research and reflection which instantiate a coherent and knowable self, able to be acted on through and as human development, and as transformation. Poststructural challenges to the humanist self, in contrast, enabled me to explore the subjectivities enacted in the various ways I was positioned and positioned myself in the research, and in the various positioning of others in the Agency. Exploring the interplay of power and knowledge with those subjectivities provided points at which other ways of being and acting could be imagined.

Acknowledgements

My first thanks must go to the staff members of Waikato Anglican Social Services and the women of Cross Rose Centre who joined me in this action inquiry. I especially want to thank Karen Morrison Hume, Director of Waikato Anglican Social Services, my friend and co-researcher. Members of the Board agreed to my involvement in the Agency, and Bishop David Moxon encouraged the inquiry in a number of direct and indirect ways. The research described here has been the work of many.

My supervisors, Maria Humphries and Kate Kearins, did a terrific job of holding open a space for me to do this academic work, providing timely and insightful feedback, encouraging me, and guiding me through the process of completion. Conversations between Maria and me over many years have contributed to this research.

Many other friends also supported me in this work with both encouragement and conversations when I needed them, especially Debbie Jones, Trish Wright, Nina Gregg, Margaret Richardson, Neil Wooding and Nicola Daly. Monica van Oostrom and Darryl Fong helped with practical advice on managing this thesis on the computer and ensured the smooth printing of final copies.

It would have been difficult for me to undertake this doctorate without the scholarships provided by the University of Waikato and St John's Theological College. Board and staff members in Social Services Waikato also encouraged me to take time when I needed it to complete writing this thesis.

And most importantly, Chris, and our daughters Clare, Grace and Erin have steadfastly been there to come home to, been patient through my absences, and nurtured me throughout. The presence of another daughter, Rose, has been with me throughout also.

Contents

Chapter 1

Locating this research

A. Introduction

Through 2000 and 2001, I undertook an action research project in a church affiliated social service agency in Aoteoroa New Zealand[1], in which I worked closely with a group of staff establishing a new residential service for women and children. In this thesis I provide a reflexive account of the action inquiry which emerged, and discuss both the contribution made to the development of the service through the action inquiry, and the contribution made to action research theory through invoking poststructural theory in the service of action research.

At the time of the inquiry, there was a growing discourse about the possibilities for community based not-for-profit organisations to contribute to social justice, in the context of the prevailing neoliberal social and economic policy in this country. A range of health and welfare community organisations were providing services previously provided by government but now contracted out by government. At the same time, poverty and exclusion had increased, and there were calls from a number of quarters for attention to those marginalised by current policy. There was a growing critique of policies, practices and structures labelled as individualistic or as arising out of Western neoliberalism. People in some community organisations, such as Waikato Anglican Social Services (the Agency), where the research presented here took place, were searching for ways to transform the lives of the people they worked with and the social structures surrounding them.

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[1] I use the name Aotearoa New Zealand for our country because it includes both Maori and English names. This is a political position I choose to take, which is explained further in Chapter 5.

At the beginning of 2000, an opportunity emerged for me to participate with staff members in Waikato Anglican Social Services, in an action research project. The mission of the Agency was for *justice through service* and staff members were establishing Cross Rose Centre, a residential learning centre, where they hoped to work with women seeking to change their lives. I was particularly interested in working with this group of staff members because they were interested in 'empowering women' and social justice more broadly. The inquiry provided an opportunity to explore the possibilities for staff members and volunteers in a church affiliated, community based, not-for-profit, social service organisation to enact and contribute to social justice ideals. Some staff members were inspired by the idea that 'building community' through their work might be a means of transformation. I wondered what the possibilities for transformation were.

I brought with me to the Agency an interest in and some experience of feminist and poststructural theory and action research, all of which contributed to the action inquiry which emerged. In social science theory, various feminist and poststructural theories have considered the possibility of transformation. Poststructural theorists such as Foucault have argued that the possibility of transformation can arise through analysing discourses, the exercise of power and the discursive location of subjects, and choosing to intervene in those discourses, sometimes by the articulation of alternatives or of resistance. Poststructural feminist theorists, for example, have argued for the possibility of transformation through transforming the production of gender. Action research has been grounded in the idea that transformation is possible and that research might contribute significantly to, or be a means of, transformation, particularly through the development of communities of inquiry asking significant questions.

The inquiry questions which emerged and evolved through the inquiry worked at a number of levels. At a practice level, the questions were about how staff members could make a difference in the lives of the women and children in the Centre. At a discourse level, they were about what kinds of discourses dominated and with what effects, and what alternative discourses might be articulated, and similarly, with what effects. At a metaphysical level, the

questions in the inquiry were about how truth and taken-for-grantedness might be challenged in order to provoke deeper inquiry, and reflexivity about the positions of staff and women in the Centre. Theoretically, a number of questions also emerged for me about the relationship between the action research paradigm and feminist poststructural theory.

The action research contributed to the life of the Agency in a number of ways, including encouraging the articulation of a discourse of resistance to neoliberal discourses for social service. This resistant discourse drew on communitarian, Christian, and action research discourses of social justice, connection, conversation, service, solidarity, action and inquiry itself. In articulating an alternative discourse, staff members were resisting powerful practices of managerialism and psychology as ways of doing social service. Being able to analyse these dominant discourses arose because the research method which emerged drew on the poststructural concepts of discourses, power, and subjectivity to enable participants to think and talk reflexively about their work. Such convergences also enabled a number of theoretical reflections about action research and poststructural discourses.

B. Structure of this thesis

This thesis contributes particularly to the action research field and critiques of social policy in this country, while also reporting on the contributions of the particular action inquiry to the practice and knowledge of social justice in a particular setting. The thesis is presented in three parts.

1. Part I: Theoretical groundings and context: poststructural and feminist theory, action research, social context

In Part I, Chapters 2-6, of this thesis, I write about the kinds of thinking I brought to the action inquiry. Chapter 2 sets out the main ideas in poststructural theory particularly as developed through Michel Foucault's work. I also draw in

feminist theory as it relates to poststructural theory and research practice. Chapters 3 and 4 are a summary of the development of action research, key principles, and influences from feminist research. At the end of Chapter 4, I raise some questions about the relationship between poststructural theory and action research. In Chapters 5 and 6, I provide a summary of economic and social policy in Aotearoa New Zealand and summarise theory about the not-for-profit and social services sectors, as a means of providing contextual information about broader social and economic concerns at the time of the inquiry.

2. Part II: Waikato Anglican Social Services, Cross Rose Centre and the action inquiry: purposes, methods, process, relationships

In Part II, Chapters 7 to 9, my narrative and an outline of the events of the research are presented. The development of the layers of research purpose is described in Chapter 7. An account of the inquiry methods and events as they emerged is presented in Chapter 8. This is followed, in Chapter 9, by a reflexive account of the research process and relationships, particularly through exploring my own subjectivity and positioning in the inquiry, drawing on the notions of first, second and third person action research.

3. Part III: Inquiry contributions

There are three chapters in Part III. In Chapter 10, I present an analysis which became a key part of the inquiry, of the dominant neoliberal discourses and subject positions available in and through the work of Cross Rose Centre. In Chapter 11, I describe the development of a discourse of resistance to those neoliberal discourses. I draw the thesis to a close in chapter 12 by considering the contribution of the inquiry to the Agency, the validity in action research terms, and some theoretical intersections and tensions between poststructural theory and the action research paradigm.

Part I

Theoretical groundings and context: poststructural and feminist theory, action research, social context

Part I sets out the key academic discourses within which I located myself and which I drew upon as an action researcher working from an epistemology of feminist poststructural theory. Although many action research theses and reports describe first the action research project and then draw in the relevant academic literature, I have chosen to summarise first those relevant academic discourses with which I was already familiar at the start of the inquiry, and which informed my work. They provide a context for the inquiry and a location for this thesis as part of broader academic conversations.

The discourse of poststructural theory is discussed in Chapter 2, as the primary epistemological lens for this research. In Chapter 3 the development of the discourses of action and feminist research is described followed by some intersections and challenges in linking the discourses of poststructural theory and action research in Chapter 4. In Chapters 5 and 6, I provide a critical analysis of the social setting within Aotearoa New Zealand during the time of this inquiry, including critiques of neoliberal social and economic policy and its influence on the work of community based social services. These discourses constitute academic fields which informed my thinking and acting as a researcher.

Chapter 2

Poststructural theory, feminist influences and action research

A. Introduction

As a researcher I drew on an epistemology informed by poststructural theory, particularly discourse theory developed by and arising out of the work of French social theorist Michel Foucault and poststructural feminist theory. In this chapter the key assumptions of poststructural theory are set out, including the concept of discourse, and related concepts, power and knowledge, subjectivity, resistance and discourse analytic research. Contributions from feminist poststructural theory and the role of reflexivity in poststructural research are then discussed.

Poststructural theory, particularly the concept of discourse, is used as a lens, an heuristic device, in this inquiry, because it provided a way in which I could problematise some particular aspects of action research, and some aspects of social service work embedded in what is increasingly called the 'third', 'community' or 'not-for-profit' sector. Foucault's work has been particularly influential in guiding social scientists to challenge truth-making regimes and the means by which those regimes are constructed. As a corollary, there is the possibility of transformation of those regimes, of thinking, knowing and being differently.

Like Scott (2000/1988), I argue that Foucault's work can be read as a warning against simple solutions to complex human concerns and as a suggestion that we think strategically and self-consciously about human actions, actors and the programmes we create. It is these poststructural ideas about the processes of power and of making truth, the possibilities of transformation, and the subject positions of individuals in these processes, that were useful in this inquiry.

B. Poststructural theory

Poststructuralist theory has been developed through the works of Foucault, Derrida, Althusser, Kristeva, Lacan and others, who theorise power, knowledge, social organisation, individual consciousness and subjectivity (Weedon, 1997). Of particular significance has been Foucault's work on discourses as sets of social interactions in which power is embedded in the very minutiae of those interactions, to construct both objects and subjects at certain points in history. Poststructural thinking has intersected with a number of fields, particularly where it has been useful in understanding and resisting existing power relations. These fields include a number of particular interest in this research: feminist theory (Weedon, 1997), critiques of organisation and management theory (Knights, 1992; Knights & Morgan, 1991), postmodern critical social work (Pease & Fook, 1999), and deconstructive psychology (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1984).

Social scientists working within what has become known as 'the language turn' of the 1970s and 80s drew attention to the constructedness of the social world. Social scientists theorising from a structuralist view also drew attention to the apparently deep social structures which determine the formation of the individual (McHoul & Grace, 1993), thus problematising Western assumptions about individual and personal agency. Poststructuralism is an epistemology developed by theorists working beyond both structuralism, and the 'language turn' in social science theory. Poststructuralist theorists endeavour both to account for the construction of social structures and the agency of persons by recognising the constitutive processes of discourses and at the same time that people can and do make choices in their discursive practices (Davies, 1991; Davies & Harre, 1990).

The next sections describe key concepts in poststructural theory, particularly concepts developed in the work of Foucault: discourse, power and knowledge, subjectivity, resistance, discourse analytic research and reflexivity in poststructural research.

1. Discourse

The term 'discourse' is used by academics in a number of ways, ranging from those who use discourse to refer to language practices, to those who use it to refer to all forms of human meaning-making (Wetherell, 2001a). Poststructural theorists tend to view language as constitutive and as blurring into practice and action in meaning-making (S. Taylor, 2001b). In this respect, language - talk or text - performs actions (Horton-Salway, 2001). Those who use the term discourse generally argue for plurality of meaning and interpretation, and at the same time, the very real consequences of the construction of meaning through discourses.

'Discourse' is also used with the particular, to refer to all of the language and social practices and ideological assumptions that constitute a world view. Hence we may speak, for example, of 'discourses of power' or 'discourses of racism' (Schiffrin, Tannen, & Hamilton, 2001). Academic research itself may be seen as a discursive practice (Horton-Salway, 2001). To do so invites observations about the constructedness of all 'data', 'evidence' and 'facts'. Miller comments, for example, that qualitative data, are social constructions and therefore "aspects of a distinctive discourse that treats the practices of everyday life as worthy topics of analysis" (1997, p.42). In a similar way, action research could be considered to be a particular academic discourse. To do so would then enable certain questions to be asked about how it is constructed, questions which are articulated and discussed in Chapter 4.

The notion of discourses has been central to Foucault's work. In his key early work, *The archaeology of knowledge* (1972), Foucault shifted theoretical attention from language to discourse as a system of representation (Hall, 2001/1997). Discourses are defined as identifiable sets of utterances and practices, which are governed by rules of construction and evaluation, so that they determine what may be said and done, by whom, and in what context within that discourse. Thus a discourse may be understood as the mechanism through which we govern the objects of our knowledge, the ways ideas are talked about, put into practice and used to govern the actions of others (Foucault, 1972). A

common feature of discourses is the invisibility and partiality of the very process of truth-making embedded within them.

Discursive practices encompass all the ways people actively produce social and psychological realities. Those practices institutionalise language and signs (Davies & Harre, 1990). Discourse is about language **and** practice or action, and to theorise from this perspective is to collapse the traditional distinction between what we say and what we do (Hall, 2001/1997). Our objects, worlds, minds and social relations are constituted or constructed through social actions theorised as arising within and through discourses (Wetherell, 2001b).

People collectively draw on discursive practices to organise their actions. The stories people tell often interest discourse researchers because narratives are used to construct identities and events (Wetherell, 2001b). Versions of reality are constructed in and through people's accounts of the world, and positioned against actual or possible alternative accounts (Horton-Salway, 2001). In any one social setting there are always a number of, if not many, discourses available and operating in complex multiple ways. As we go about the practical activities of our lives, we enter into discourses (Miller, 1997). The discourses we enter into matter because they provide the possibilities for the social reality we construct and maintain. Discourses provide the limits of what it is possible to say about something within certain historical timeframes.

Discourses are always historical, always contextual. The historically situated fields of knowledge Foucault called discursive formations, bring into existence certain objects of knowledge which only exist because of the possibility of speaking of them (Foucault, 1972; Rouse, 1994). The power effects of discourses are obvious only at certain times and at certain places:

> While politically consequential, our entrance into discourses is experienced as unremarkable because we associate different discourses with different kinds of settings. Thus discourses might be said to have their own social settings, although it is uncommon for only one discourse to be available in a social setting. (Miller, 1997, p.33)

By noticing the availability of multiple discourses in a particular setting, we are able to raise questions about the discontinuities between and within the discourses and the implications of giving or allowing dominance of one over another. Sometimes we observe these discontinuities when people move between different discourses, or work within a discourse to produce unexpected or different orientations to practical issues.

Weedon (1997) describes a discursive field as a group of competing ways of framing the world which offer a number of possibilities for knowing and being positioned as subjects. Within a discursive field, not all discourses carry equal weight or power. Some maintain the status quo, others change existing practices from within, others challenge the very basis of the way the world has been framed. These alternative discourses tend to be dismissed as marginal, irrelevant, irrational or just plain 'bad'. Such judgements speak of the way in which power is enacted through discourses, and in Foucauldian theory, the way in which power is intimately linked with knowledge.

2. Power and knowledge

To be interested in discourses is also to be interested in how power moves through the various activities and interactions that constitute everyday life. Foucault (1980) suggests that power circulates around us, that power emerges through a process of drawing from various discourses as a means of taking action in the world. This conceptualisation of power is in stark contrast to many traditional social science constructions of power as something which can be possessed, which generally speaking, certain elite groups hold over the groups they dominate, who, generally speaking, are constructed as powerless. In such constructions, power tends to be viewed as repressive.

For Foucault (1977; 1981), discourses have or yield specific power effects. Power operates, is exercised, at all levels of social life, including, significantly, the local tactical level, in the many small practices of everyday life (Foucault, 1981). Power is constituted through discourses and therefore constructs or produces both knowledge and truth. Power is always a matter of discursive

relations. Foucault asks how power produces material effects, including subjects who act as channels of power. The material effects of power also include the instruments for deciding on and recording knowledge, the methods of observation and the systems of registration, investigation and social control.

In *Discipline and punish* (1977), Foucault demonstrated the way in which techniques of disciplinary power can be dangerous precisely because of their seeming neutrality and political invisibility. Power is embedded in sets of knowledge which themselves appear neutral. Complex sets of power/knowledge relations produce the particular truths of an historical period (Foucault, 1981). Exhaustive systems of surveillance, metaphorically represented by Foucault as the panopticon or the gaze, ensure the maintenance of regimes of truth existing in discourses. Surveillance involves the observation and control of individuals through a network of relations which are manifest as self-disciplining techniques in individuals (Foucault, 1980).

Foucault's (1977; 1981) work relating power, knowledge and subjects demonstrated how closely the emergence of certain knowledges has been enmeshed in the practice of power, and the way in which individuals are caught in those relations of knowledge and power, as individuals to be trained, supervised and controlled. Power is productive; it produces knowledge (Foucault, 1977). Knowledge is a matter of the social, historical and political conditions which make some statements count as truth.

Foucault's (1980) institutional apparatus and technologies are the means by which power operates, in relation to particular knowledge. Knowledge is always a form of power and power is always present in questions about whether or not specific knowledge is to be applied in a certain setting. Knowledge is used as and has the capacity to become a mantel of truth, and it is this capacity of power/ knowledge that Foucault argues we should be interested in, rather than in assessing its truthfulness. Power and knowledge operate mutually; all ways of knowing are operations of power. Knowledge is used to regulate, constrain and discipline the conduct of others (Foucault, 1977).

Discursive formations sustain a regime of truth that has real consequences for those regulating and regulated through it. A discursive formation is apparent when a range of discursive events enacts knowledge and a set of power relations in a similar way. Hall (2001/1997) describes the example of the 'knowledge' that single parenting inevitably leads to delinquency and crime, which may or may not be a co-relation that may be demonstrated, but which has consequences for parents and children with the effect that it becomes seen as true or real for many of them.

Foucault's later works show the change over time of human practice and belief, so as to show that what we know at any one time is not immutable, is contestable, even reversible:

> It is one of my targets to show people that a lot of things that are part of the landscape - that people think are universal - are the result of some very precise historical changes. (1988, p.11)

Structures and institutions that come to be seen as normal, natural and incontestable, are both arbitrary and historically contingent, rather than rationally or objectively necessary (Foucault, 1982). In this sense, history shows us that what we believe to be truth, what we 'know' has not always been truth or known, and will not always be (Foucault, 1977; Gutting, 1994). The reason and rationality of a particular time create the social order. Dominant discourses produce what we count as truth, as normal and natural, and establish boundaries for what may be said, and for what is considered acceptable and appropriate. Weedon (1997) suggests that the most common guarantees of 'truth' in this era, are 'science', 'God' and 'common sense'. Discursive power acts through normalising processes which evoke both what is normal and what is abnormal. Normalising processes arise out of the techniques of both self-regulation and surveillance (Sawicki, 1991).

The social order is used to coercively exclude those who are constituted through discursive relations as disordered or unreasonable. The official knowledge normalises certain subjects, divides those we consider good subjects from those we consider bad. Such normalising is a limiting of human possibility. Discursive relations produce exhaustive means of discipline and surveillance,

operating moment by moment, and which, through the many low level circuits of power, produce global and hierarchical structures of domination. Foucault (1977; 1981) showed particularly the way in which techniques of punishment and confinement produce and are produced by official knowledges of crime and psychiatry, and thus produce criminals and the insane, in the context of what is deemed at that time to be 'normal'.

In his earlier works, Foucault demonstrated the means by which processes theorised as discursive formations constrain and discipline the individual. In his later works, Foucault also developed the notion of 'governmentality', the regulation of a population, nation or territory combined with the regulation of oneself, a household, organisation or some other grouping, such as the poor, the sick or the unemployed (Rouse, 1994).

Foucault (1991) suggests that dominant discourses of liberalism are the most influential current rationalities of government. These discourses are distinguished by an emphasis on individual liberty and rights, and governance through a limited form of economic reasoning. They are used to govern through a particularly modern form of Enlightenment, based on morally and intellectually validated sets of knowledge and practices of social improvement, therapy and order, all of which operate through identifying and attempting to correct various deviations from the given norms. Foucault was particularly sceptical about the efficacy of this Enlightenment version of humanism as a philosophy of freedom (Sawicki, 1994). In the late 1990s, Foucault's notion of governmentality has been taken up by a number of other writers, particularly those seeking to elucidate and critique the changing nature of liberal government and the related movement away from the welfare state ideal (Dean, 1999). Discourses of liberalism are discussed further in Chapter 5 and 6 to examine their implications for the setting of social policy in Aotearoa New Zealand in the time pertinent to this research.

Foucault encourages serious thought about "truth" as it is constructed through our knowledge, experiences and forms of verification. He suggests that we should be concerned with the appearance, practices and effects of truth-making:

> It seems to me that the real political task in a society such as ours is to critique the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticise them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight against them. (Foucault, in Elders, 1974, p.171)

Knowledges, truths, and power are not evil in themselves, but everything is potentially dangerous. To think about the dangers requires that we

> avoid equally the twin seductions of paranoia and universal suspicion, on the one hand, and the compulsive quest for foundational certainties and guarantees, on the other – both of which serve to impede or dispense us from the rational and responsible work of careful and specific investigation. (Gordon, 2000, p.xix)

It is in the spirit of the kind of careful work and critique described in both of the above quotes, that a poststructural approach has been used in the inquiry described in this thesis.

3. Subjectivity

The term subjectivity is used primarily within poststructural theory to refer to both individuality and awareness of self, but with the underlying view that subjects are multiple, dynamic, and related to the discourses within which they are produced (Henriques et al., 1984). Subjects are produced and make sense from within discourses. Subjects and subject positions are constantly being constructed. Individuals emerge through the various social interactions and the discursive practices in which they participate (Alcoff, 2000/1988).

Foucault's later works demonstrate the constitution of subjectivity through power relations. The word 'subject' is used in two ways: in the sense of being 'subject to' someone or something else, and in the sense of being tied to our own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. In both senses, a form of power is at work (Foucault, 1994/1982). Individuals are both 'subject to' and 'subjects of' discourses (Foucault, 1994/1982). Subjection is the disciplinary process by

which we are able to see ourselves as individual subjects and therefore unable to see ourselves as anything else (Foucault, 1980).

The very power of discursive practices lies in their provision of certain subject positions (Davies & Harre, 1990). Discourses are powerfully constitutive; people intentionally and unintentionally take up positions within discourses. Subject positions make sense within certain discourses. To take up a subject position is to be located as a certain self within a particular storyline. It happens reflexively when we position ourselves, and interactively, when we are positioned by others, though both processes may be intentional or unintentional (Davies & Harre, 1990). Positioning is the discursive process through which selves are located in jointly produced conversations or story lines. When a person speaks or acts from a particular position, he or she brings a sense of themselves as a subjective being within a particular discourse that makes that position possible. Each person has a history of being in many positions and discourses; who we are is complex, messy and transitory.

Discourses create possible subject positions; people are positioned by the language they speak. And talk is dialogical. We combine many voices when we speak (Wetherell, 2001b). What has come to be talked about as the 'politics of representation' refers to the ongoing contesting for social meaning, for and through discursive practices (Wetherell, 2001b).

This view of subjectivity represents a considerable break from the Western humanist tradition of the essential, unified and rational individual (Kilby & Lury, 2000; Weedon, 1997). As Gordon (2000) points out, Foucault's work encourages doubt and discomfort about what we are given to know about our very humanity, particularly our modern form of Enlightenment in which individuals are subjected to various forms of social improvement, therapy and order.

This break from the humanist tradition also reverberates throughout more recent feminist theorising, as is discussed below. As for Foucault, feminism has latterly been a politics of identity, albeit gender-based for feminism, with an ambivalent

relationship to the universalism and essentialism of Enlightenment humanism (Sawicki, 1994). Zaretsky (1994) suggests that the notion of subjects and subjectivity implies that culture is composed of subject positions, not individuals. The politics of identity emphasise plurality and difference, and are always implicated in questions of dominance. From a poststructuralist perspective, the questions become the following:

Who controls the definitions and identities?

What are the political effects of these definitions? (Torrie & Jones, 1998)

Liberation, from this perspective, is not the assertion of identity, but liberation from our identity, from the limited and limiting subject positions available to us. As subjects, we are able to reflect on the positions available to us and to challenge the discourses within which they are embedded (Alcoff, 2000/1988).

4. Resistance

Foucault (1981) discussed at various points the ways in which power may be undermined, altered and resisted at every point. Discourses always contain within them the possibilities of resistance. For Foucault, resistance is endemic in power. It is never outside of power, but opposition is invoked through the production of power itself. Where there are relations of power, the possibility of resistance is always present:

> There are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised; resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being the compatriot of power. It exists all the more by being in the same place as power. Hence, like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies. (Foucault, 1980, p.142)

Foucault suggests that resisting the techniques of power may be more effective than resisting the power. This requires examining the taken-for-grantedness of discursive relations. Analysis can be used to show the contingency and contestability of social reality. Rather than focussing on concepts of oppression and emancipation, and emancipation from oppression, we may be better to focus

on producing alternative discourses, alternative forms of power and alternative subject positions as a means of changing political relations.

Since Foucault's evocation of resistance a number of theorists have taken the notion further, debating its usefulness, limitations and possibilities. Clegg (1994), for example, suggests that we need to avoid the risks of romanticising resistance. Power and resistance are co-produced; power is not necessarily exercised to eliminate resistance (Knights & Vurdubakis, 1994). Similarly resistance can be the means by which power is re-authorised, and dominant discourses reconstituted (Knights & Vurdubakis, 1994). Indeed resistance to the techniques of discipline only make the discipline more necessary (Clegg, 1994). The techniques and effects of power and resistance are likely to be far more complex than any simple polarity or binary and must be examined in the particular instances and through their particular means in specific contexts (Jermier, Knights, & Nord, 1994). Foucault's treatment of power and resistance as analytical conditions of each other, goes some distance to resisting the dualism of power and powerlessness (Knights & Vurdubakis, 1994).

People do find ways to resist dominant discourses, and to develop their own discourses of resistance. As Fairclough (1985) points out, critiques of discourses do not occur just in critical academic work, but in all the everyday practices of subjects, and in this way they become material resistance. Fish (1999) suggests that Foucault's notion of resistance is primarily about destabilising dominant discourses rather than stabilising any alternative. However, many theorists and researchers have used the notion of resistance to provoke the development of resistant discourses:

> Dominant discourses are totalising only for those who view them as such; they are replete with fissures and uncolonized spaces within which people engage in highly satisfying and even resistant practices of knowledge-making. (Miller & Glassner, 1997, p.100)

Resistant discourses can at least offer the space from which individuals can resist dominant subject positions. Kearins (1996) suggests that an act of resistance is an exercise of power, and can therefore have both intended and unintended

power effects, including radical change and including the unintended consolidation of the dominant.

More recent writers suggest that resistance is closely interwoven with subjectivity and identity:

> It is the formation and reformation of self that is the aspect of subjectivity most important for understanding contemporary strategies of resistance. Self-formation is ordinarily a complex outcome of subjection or subjugation, and resistance to it. Although subjectivities are effects of power, subjectification and self-identities are always in process. Power, then does not directly determine identity but merely provides the conditions of possibility for its self-formation – a process involving perpetual tension between power and resistance or subjectivity and identity. (Jermier et al., 1994, p.8)

Power is exercised through disciplining the bodies, minds and emotions of individuals. To position someone as irrational, for example, is "a favourite ploy of power" (Clegg, 1994, p.312). To resist such disciplining requires at least some level of consciousness of a will to resist (Clegg, 1994). This requires a view of people engaged in resistance as active and wilful in negotiating their social realities, which are only partly of their own making. Such a view avoids both the extremes of a structuralist view and the voluntaristic self-determining view of people, and at the same time recognises that analyses from both of these can be useful (Jermier et al., 1994).

5. Discourse analytic research

Those who undertake research from a discourse point of view begin from the premise that discourses, power/knowledge, subjectivity and resistance, can only be understood in the specific contexts which they produce and in which they are produced. It is only possible to see whose interests are shaped and served by a particular discourse by looking at its operation at a particular time in a particular place. Discourse analysis establishes the way discourses are "practised, operationalised and supported, institutionally, professionally, socially, legally and economically" (Carabine, 2001, p.276). Discourse analysis in this sense is a

specific and local analysis of the workings of power (McHoul & Grace, 1993). The method of inquiry developed in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1977) highlights the absence of single causal factors, the multiplicity and complexity of objects, domains and layers of both cause and determination.

Social policy researchers, sociologists and cultural studies researchers tend to use Foucauldian or critical discourse analysis (Wetherell, 2001a), sometimes as a means of making an unheard voice heard. Critical discourse analysis is especially concerned with the modes of production or the use of discourse in producing and challenging domination (Van Dijk, 1993; 2001). Foucault's approach is seen by some as critical, since it provides an alternative reading of history and social conditions (McHoul & Grace, 1993). Others suggest that critical discourse analysis has been influenced more by Marxist theory than by poststructural discourse analysis (Wetherell, 2001a).

Both, however, are concerned to identify the ways in which certain groups maintain their own vested interests, the ways dominant discourses function to produce and legitimate domination, and to do such analysis from a politically engaged position. For example, discourse analysis has been used by anti-racism writers to identify the way in which discourses can produce through their practices of representation, a racialised 'other', which is deeply implicated in the operations of power. Resistance to this 'other' can happen through the politics of identity, through engaging specifically with the lived tensions of racial identity, as activists such as belle hooks (1994; 2000) do.

Hall (2001/1997) lists clearly those elements which a discourse approach would attend to. Foucault's works on punishment, sexuality and mental illness detailed all of these. A study of discourses about a particular topic would include the following:

a) statements about the topic which give us a certain kind of knowledge about it or the substance of the topic;

b) the rules which govern what may be said and what may not be said about that topic at a particular time and in a particular place;

c) subjects who in some way personify the topic, because we expect them to have certain attributes governed by how that topic has been constructed;

d) ways in which this knowledge about the topic becomes authoritative, becomes 'truth';

e) the practices within institutions for dealing with the subjects, or the ways of controlling, punishing or disciplining those who deviate from what has been constructed as the norm;

f) acknowledgement that a different discourse will emerge at a different time, with new power and authority and truth. (Hall, 2001/1997)

A discourse analysis is an investigation of the way truth claims are produced. Poststructural researchers are also concerned with power and resistance, often through articulating the interaction between concrete local situations and the subjectivity of agents involved in complex power-resistance relations.

6. Poststructural reflexivity

Engaging with the notion of subjectivity has led many researchers in a range of social science fields to articulate a need for reflexivity in their research. Both reflection and reflexivity within the action research literature are discussed in Chapter 4 below. To be a researcher within a poststructural framework includes reflexivity about subjectivity, about self; that is self in relation to the research setting and the setting as enmeshed in a number of discourses, and self in relation to research itself as a particular discourse. Feminist theorists in particular, have led discussions about the need for reflexivity about gender and subjectivity in research processes (Maynard, 1994).

Many writers about methodology in social science now identify a need to be reflexive, that is to write and speak openly about the social, personal and practical contingencies that have helped to shape the knowledge or ideas produced through the research (Brewer, 2000). Within ethnographic research, for example, reflexivity is now seen as fundamental. Researchers are required to reflect on the interrelationships among research process, their roles or positions, theoretical structures, conclusions and the data collected (Harvey, 1990).

Reflexivity is about recognising the limits of our representations (Brewer, 2000) or truth claims, and articulating the constructedness of our accounts. Reflexivity "acts as a bridge between interpretation and the process by which it is conveyed in text" (Brewer, 2000, p.127).

Reflexivity involves rejecting the separation between action and ontology, and accepting that social being and identity are always involved in knowledge statements, including statements about action, agency and behaviour (Somers & Gibson, 1994). Herz suggests that the outcome of reflexive social science is "reflexive social knowledge; statements that provide insight on the workings of the social world *and* insight on how that knowledge came into existence" (1997, p.viii). Reflexivity should permeate every part of the research process, because researchers are active participants in the process. It requires an understanding of the way researchers locate themselves, including within the hierarchies of gender, race, class and citizenship, because those locations are imposed on all aspects of the research. Researchers tend to study things which trouble them or intrigue them; we begin from our own standpoint (Herz, 1997). Reinharz (1997) provides an example of such reflexivity when she explores both the self/many selves she brought to a kibbutz study, and the self/many selves created in the field through the study. She also warns against both the extremes of unreflective research accounts, and narcissistic accounts of self.

The accusation of narcissism or self indulgence sometimes made of reflexive research accounts is challenged by Mykhalovsky (1996) who suggests that such criticism rests in an individual/social dualism that obfuscates how writing about the self involves, at the same time, writing about the 'other' and how work on the 'other' is also about the self of the writer. He uses his own autobiographical writing and a layering of voices to challenge traditional forms of sociology and ethnography which continue to position self as invisible authority, unrelated to what is known except as expert. He argues that to write about our lives is to write about social experiences. By extension, to be reflexive about the ways we position ourselves is to understand the workings of our social worlds, to understand the workings of the discourses in which certain subject positions are available to us.

Some feminists, in particular, have used the metaphor of voice and silence to examine aspects of reflexivity and subjectivity. For example, in a research project exploring the careers of women, Maria Humphries and I, as co-researchers, were keenly aware of the ways in which speaking out or choosing to be silent about what we had come to know as researchers, were related to the subject positions available to us, both with research participants and in academic discussions (Gatenby & Humphries, 1999; 2000a).

Gordon provides an exemplar of reflexive research which uses silence to examine ways she is positioned and positions herself as a Black woman in Britain. By examining her own silences, she is able to articulate the profound ways in which layering of silences maintain "the societal taboo around race and racism in British society" (2001, p.319), and to work towards her own bicultural competence in resistance to this silencing. Just as discourse at once produces power, and provides for resistance to it, so silence too is complicit with the manufacture of power, and at the same time provides the possibility of thwarting that power (Foucault, 1981).

Part of the process of reflexivity includes figuring out how to represent ourselves, figuring out the voices of our representation of both ourselves and those we do research with. Herz (1997) notes that giving up the authority of the apparently objective researcher and speaking personally is risky, and that anonymity often becomes more difficult when we write in ways which allow other voices to come through. Reinharz (1997) suggests that as researchers, we both bring and create ourselves in our research, and participants see us as much more than just researchers. She comments that poststructural theory has made us more sensitive to the hidden voices and identities in our research.

C. Feminist and poststructural theory

In the research presented in this thesis, a feminist poststructural lens is used to focus both on the discursive construction of gender and the gendering of meaning

and privilege or oppression. Poststructural theory and contemporary feminist theories are both movements of the latter decades of the twentieth century. They share a "certain self-conscious relationship to established philosophical and political traditions" (Scott, 2000/1988, p.414). Feminist theorists have played an exemplary role in developing critical approaches to language and communication (Van Dijk, 2001). The turn to discourse and discourse analysis has also been profoundly influenced by feminist theories because of their attention to the flow of power between large political arenas and our everyday experiences of being gendered subjects (Parker, 1999).

Although some feminist theorists criticise Foucault's work for its lack of attention to the gendered nature of subjectivity, a number of others have identified synergies and convergences grounded in political and ethical commitments, between Foucault's work and poststructural feminism (Diamond & Quinby, 1988). Sawicki (1994), for example, poses a number of questions for feminists in the light of Foucault's work. She sees his work as being of special interest to feminists because it presents a discourse of interventions in the particular struggles of oppressed groups, particularly homosexuals, prisoners and mental patients:

> His analyses of disciplinary forms of power exercised outside the confines of the narrowly defined political realm of the modern liberal state overlap with feminist insights about the politics of personal life. His emphasis on the sexual body as the target and vehicle of this new form of power/knowledge is reproduced in feminist analyses of modern forms of patriarchal control over women's minds and bodies in the context of the emergence of the sciences of medicine, social work and psychology. Further...his critique of Enlightenment humanism and its appeals to an autonomous subject of knowledge and history mirrors to some extent the radical challenges that feminism has posed to the fundamental epistemological and political assumptions in modern Western thought. (Sawicki, 1994, p.290)

Poststructural feminists have used Foucault's work both to articulate the disciplinary technologies that subjugate women as subjects and objects of knowledge, and to elaborate on cultures and strategies of resistance.

Poststructural theory provides a way of thinking in pluralities and diversities rather than in unities and universals, and a way of provoking alternative ways of thinking and being (Scott, 2000/1988).

Kilby and Lury suggest that subject matters are "fundamental to feminist theory and practice" (2000, p.253). Much feminist theory and practice has been a challenge to the universalism, ethnocentrism and essentialism of the liberal autonomous subject, a subject which is actually very particular, both culturally and historically (Weedon, 1997). Many feminist writers and speakers have elaborated numerous cases of marginalised subjectivity. Black, post-colonial and poststructural feminists have challenged Western groupings of women and social class, and more recently demonstrated the ways in which simplistic social constructionist approaches to explaining gender difference and inequity can display the same features of exclusion, essentialism, pathologising of difference, and ahistoricism of biological determinism (Kilby & Lury, 2000). Poststructuralist feminism does not attempt to fix truth, but provides a way in which a subject may reflect upon the discursive relations in which she is constituted and constitutes herself, and the society in which she lives. The particular feminist strategy which may be used depends on her analysis of the power/knowledge relations (Weedon, 1997).

Judith Butler's poststructural feminism has been particularly useful in moving beyond the limitations of earlier feminist theory. Her focus in *Gender Trouble* (1990), on doing gender, rather than being a gender, has enabled a more detailed, nuanced and processual understanding of gender (Kilby & Lury, 2000). Butler evokes gender as performative, as an enactment, as an effect, rather than a cause. Femininity and masculinity are a consequence not a cause, and are constantly being re-made. The notion that gender is accomplished through social interaction radically destabilises essentialist and reductionist theories of gender (Edley, 2001). To explore women's subjectivity is to explore the experience of being discursively constituted as woman/female (Davies, 1992).

To cause 'gender trouble' is to trouble the boundaries between male and female gendering (Butler, 1990). Resistance happens through subverting identities, or

intervening in the enactment of gender. Thus a fixed stable feminine subject is no longer necessary to feminist politics. In this sense, Butler does something similar to Foucault; she challenges the foundational self, and politicises the many ways and operations through which identity, including gendered identity, is formed and maintained (Sawicki, 1994).

The formation of identity, of the subject, is regulated but not determined. Thus agency is not denied by poststructural feminism but reformulated as choice points or variations possible within the regulatory and normalising patterns of particular discourses (Sawicki, 1994). Understanding the particularity of women's subjectivity, and hence agency, is to work with the possibilities and difficulties of transformation (Sawicki, 1994). Sawicki (1994) argues for a reinvigoration of feminist consciousness-raising which is an analysis of the possibilities for self and identity in the particular contexts and locales of women's lives. Kilby and Lury argue for a "transformative vision of subjectivity which recognises that subjects are always embodied and embedded in relationship with others" (2000, p.256). Transformation here is not a matter of individual agency for the liberal autonomous individual. Weedon (1997) suggests that post-structural feminism offers a theoretical perspective which challenges such individualism by paying close attention to the specific and contextual production of subject positions and modes of femininity.

D. Poststructural theory and action research

In the research reported in this thesis, a feminist poststructural approach is taken. I use the Foucauldian notion of discourse alongside an action research approach. Linking poststructural and action research theory raises a number of questions about the ways in which they intersect, contradict and overlay each other. Viewing action research as a discourse, and discursive practice, provokes questions about subjectivity as an action researcher and the power/knowledge nexus in action research sites. It is an approach which requires an analysis of truth claims about knowledge-making within the action research discourse and

which creates some methodological challenges. These challenges became part of the project and are written about in Parts II and III of this thesis. In the next two chapters, I set out the development and epistemology of action research, and the contributions to methodology from aspects of feminist research. I then introduce a number of issues that arise out of linking the discourses of poststructural theory and action research.

Chapter 3

Action research: development, principles and issues

A. Introduction

I present this account of the development of action research for two reasons. First, I explicitly situated myself as an action and participatory researcher in the early stages of the research. Second, through the process of the inquiry described in this thesis, a number of tensions and possibilities within action research as a discourse of transformation emerged for me, tensions which are explored later in this thesis and which contribute to ongoing conversations about the nature and purpose of action research.

The title 'action research' covers a wide variety of approaches and assumptions about the nature and purposes of such research. Reason and Bradbury (2001) in their Introduction to the *Handbook of Action Research*, suggest there are five broadly shared features linking all of the approaches: human flourishing, participation and democracy, knowledge-in-action, practical issues and an emergent developmental form. They propose the following working definition:

> Action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (2001, p.1)

They also point out that action research is fundamentally different to traditional academic research in its purposes, relationships, knowledge claims, and relation to practice. It is more than just a different methodology.

In the next sections, I describe aspects of the development of action research as a research discourse, including the convergence of participatory and action research theory and practice, and a typology for action research in social service settings. The relationship between action research and developments in social science epistemology is described, together with a particular view of validity in action research. In Chapter 4, I go on to discuss the complexities of action research as participative, liberating, and reflective process, and the contributions of feminist theory and methods to action research.

B. The development of action research

Reason and Bradbury (2001) suggest that one coherent history of the development of action research is probably not possible. Its roots are many, varied and complex, and some are acknowledged more than others. Over recent decades, different titles and traditions have arisen as groups of people have worked in different, but related ways, in alternative research discourses. In these next sections, some of the generally acknowledged developments in action research are described, including participatory research, action science, professional practice and community development, and participatory action research.

1. Participatory research

Participatory research is often described as having developed through the work of a number of groups and people in the late 1970s and 1980s, such as the International Council for Adult Education in Toronto (Rahman, 1993), the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (Participatory Research Network, 1982), the work of Orlando Fals Borda and colleagues in Colombo, Nicaragua, Africa and Mexico (Fals-Borda, 1985; 1992; 2001), and rural development programmes such as that of Swantz and colleagues in Tanzania (Swantz, Ndeya, & Masaiganah, 2001; Swantz & Vainio-Mattila, 1988). The focus of the participatory research paradigm is on researchers working with individuals and

communities, particularly those oppressed, exploited or marginalised, to determine what research was needed, how it should be conducted, and what sense would be made of it. Much participatory research grew out of the experiences of people seeking to develop ways of combining active commitment to social change with an approach to research (Hall, 1979).

Research that is participatory has at its heart an acknowledgement that people, individually and collectively, are able to reflect on the nature of their own world and find their own solutions to their own concerns (Bhatt & Tandon, 2001; Rahman, 1993; Reason, 1994a). And indeed that those are likely to be the best and most workable solutions. The focus on self-reflected learning within Western traditions of participatory research has been profoundly influenced by the Freirean notion of 'conscientization' developed in Latin American popular education movements (Participatory Research Network, 1982; Rahman, 1993). Conscientization involves developing a critical consciousness of the construction of the history and context of a locale, and linking that knowledge with learning and action for liberation (Freire, 1972; 1982). Intellectuals, or researchers, may act as catalysts in conscientization and in developing collective action for self-reliance, and build their understanding of this praxis, but move out of grass-roots movements as development occurs.

Some writers call for acknowledgement of indigenous traditions in the development of participatory and grass roots research (Pyrch & Castillo, 2001). Others comment that participative forms of inquiry have always been a part of human cultures (Hall, 2001). In Aotearoa New Zealand, Tuhiwai Smith uses the term community action research to describe research by indigenous local groups:

> Community action approaches assume that people know and can reflect on their own lives, have questions and priorities of their own, have skills and sensitivities which can enhance (or undermine) any community-based projects. (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p.127)

Participatory research has also been developed particularly through participatory rural appraisal and more recently through the development of participatory methods in health research in both the first and third worlds (Koning & Martin, 1996).

While participatory approaches were being developed in a number of places and within a number of communities around the world, developments in action research, action science and community development in Britain and the United States were also occurring.

2. Action research, professional practice and community development

Those working under the early umbrella of action research focused on action or practice, as process in the research, and pragmatism as research motivation. The concerns of practitioners became the guide for research questions and process (Argyris & Schon, 1991). A number of traditions merged to form the umbrella of action research. Lewin, a US psychologist, is generally cited as having first used the term 'action research' in the 1940s to refer to research about, and to change, a particular social setting (Brooks & Watkins, 1994; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Lewin's (1952) concept of research included the still often written about cycle of planning, action, and evaluation.

At a similar time and over the next decades, members of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in Britain were developing a new form of consultancy which included a focus on establishing relationships with clients over time, a focus on client needs and an approach to research as social process (Cunningham, 1993; Hart & Bond, 1995). Within organisations and some education settings, 'action science' and 'action learning' technologies developed during the 1970s and 1980s (Brooks & Watkins, 1994). Action research was argued to be appropriate for organisational research given the complexities of the social settings of organisations, the construction of organisational knowledge, and their contextuality (Susman & Evered, 1978).

More recently, organisational development and cooperative inquiry have continued the growth of action research and inquiry practices in organisational settings (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Action research in a variety of forms became linked more closely with management and management learning (Raelin, 1999). In Scandinavia, action research developed from the 1960s, with the intention of democratising working life. More recent Scandinavian

developments have included a commitment to democratise the research process itself as a necessary part of democratising work (Elden & Gjersvik, 1994).

In the 1960s, also in Britain, a number of community development projects were initiated to experiment with new ways of tackling poverty. They attempted to use research for the benefit of action, a paradigm drawn from social policy research (Green and Chapman, cited in Hart and Bond, 1995). By the 1970s, action inquiry strategies were well developed, particularly through the adult education and community development movements (Brooks & Watkins, 1994).

Meanwhile, action research was being developed and used extensively in education with a focus on critical reflection and reflective practice (Kemmis, 1988). Within teaching, action research has been much discussed as having potential for bridging, unifying and/or transforming the 'theory/practice' divide (Elliot, 1991). Much of this work also contains a social justice perspective (see, for example, Noffke & Stevenson, 1995; Zeichner & Gore, 1995). More recently, Sherman and Torbert call on university members to engage with communities and practitioners in transforming and empowering social inquiry and action to tackle the "wicked" problems of the world and contribute to social justice (2000, pp. 3-4).

Within the 'helping professions', particularly social work and nursing (Greenwood, 1994; Meyer, 1993), action research has also developed alongside a focus on reflective professional practice. In Aotearoa New Zealand, for example, Connolly (2001a) argues for an action reflection process as essential in social work practice. The action research practices of inquiry, action and reflection, appear to match those iterative practices of needs assessment, intervention and evaluation, of many social service practitioners (Hart & Bond, 1995). Indeed, the discourse of health and social service reform and research-led practice, appear to point directly to action research as an appropriate discourse.

3. Participatory action research

Academics and activists in other parts of the world, began combining the terms 'participatory research' and 'action research' as 'participatory action research'. Rahman (1993) commented in 1982, that the term participatory action research might be used to talk about action research that is participatory, and participatory research which unites with action for social transformation, but that there was not, at that point, a convergent theoretical position. Whyte (1991) suggests that participatory action research is primarily about people in groups acting as participants in all of the research processes. Pyrch and Castillo describe the essence of participatory action research in the following metaphor drawn from a Native American image of sweet grass:

> In PAR [participatory action research], it is accepted as simple and straightforward that we are only one blade of grass, but that we are rooted next to the next blade, which is rooted to the next, and so on. All those blades are working together, holding each other up in order to achieve a common objective. The nature of PAR is nothing more, nothing less. (2001, p.381)

Reason (1994a) highlights two aims of participatory action research: consciousness-raising and the production of knowledge for the purpose of social change. In participatory action research, diverse methods emerge out of community dialogue and involvement.

Currently there appears to be a settling on (or determining of by British and American academics) the nomenclature 'action research' as an overarching title, as evidenced in the publication by leading academic publisher Sage, of the *Handbook of Action Research* (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). In the *Handbook*, Reason and Bradbury suggest that all action research must be participative, and indeed that all participatory research must be action research. They inextricably link action and participation.

4. Action research and social service

Action research is increasingly used in health, particularly nursing research, and social care research. Within these action research accounts, a number of key themes can be traced, including the relationship between action research, social care or service, and social change. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Munford and Sanders (1999) suggest that action research has been used in social and community work to connect people with the challenges they face in relation to wider social and economic policies. They also point out that action research can be used to understand the intervention strategies used by social service workers.

A number of classifications of action research have been developed (see for example Watkins & Brooks, 1994). Hart and Bond (1995) developed a typology for action research in social care settings which aim to contribute to social change and social justice. The research described in this thesis took place in a social service agency with a vision of contributing to social justice through its service work. Therefore it seems appropriate to draw on the typology developed by Hart and Bond.

Hart and Bond (1995) attempt to clarify the nature of action research by drawing on the traditions described above, to develop a typology of four classifications of action research: *experimental, organisational, professionalising* and *empowering*. These classifications are distinguished by the interplay of seven distinguishing criteria. Action research:

is educative;
deals with individuals as members of social groups;
is problem-focused, context-specific and future-oriented;
involves a change intervention;
aims at improvement and involvement;
involves a cyclic process in which research, action and evaluation are interlinked; and
is founded on a research relationship in which those involved are participants in the change process.

Hart and Bond (1995) suggest that their typology be used as a guide for making sense of what is going on in specific action research projects, rather than being used prescriptively. They also note that an action research project can move between the different forms they distinguish, and that the typology is necessarily a simplification of the complex process of action research. For the purposes of this research, it is the *professionalising* and the *empowering* classifications of their typology that are of most interest, and particularly the latter. Both reflect a social constructionist ontology, and a social change imperative.

Professionalising action research is informed by a desire for research-led practice and reflects the aspirations of the social care professions, such as nursing, teaching and social work. The focus is on reflective practice and practitioners, empowerment of professional groups and advocacy for clients, and problems emerging from professional practice or experience. Change interventions are professionally led and improvement is seen in terms of professional practice. Research and action are held in tension with research tending to dominate. The dynamic process of action and reflection emerges as a spiral. Practitioners and researchers collaborate and there is some merging of roles between the two (Hart & Bond, 1995).

Empowering action research draws from community development approaches and aims to work against oppression of vulnerable groups. The educative model is one of consciousness-raising, shifting balances of power, empowering oppressed groups and structural change towards pluralism. Research interventions may not be as discrete or identifiable as in other forms of action research, and may include a variety of forms, such as building alliances, opening up lines of communication, and reframing issues, all of which may contribute to change, though they may not necessarily be the sole cause of change. The focus is on clients or users of services and practitioners. Groups involved in this kind of action research tend to be fluid, self-selecting, or negotiated. Research problems emerge and are negotiated with less powerful groups. Exploration of the problems is in itself part of the process of intervention and change. Change interventions tend to be driven from the bottom-up, undetermined and led by process. Competing definitions of success and pluralist definitions of

improvement and vested interests are both expected and accepted. Action tends to be more dominant than research. The focus is on process and changing a course of events rather than general laws of causality, and multiple influences upon change are acknowledged. People working from this perspective tend to view themselves as both practitioners and researchers, or as co-researchers, or as co-change agents (Hart & Bond, 1995).

Whitmore's (1994) account of an evaluation of a pre-natal programme for single expectant mothers is an example of empowering research. A group of users of the programme were funded and supported to conduct an evaluation of the programme alongside the author, as co-evaluators. Whitmore describes learning about the gap between university-trained researchers and members of oppressed groups, the complexities of relationships as co-researchers, trust and participation, what is counted as knowledge and what such knowledge contributes to our understanding. She suggests that the differences in world views are huge and to a certain extent insurmountable, but that participatory research methods can permeate or reduce the barriers. Such participatory methods must allow for time and thoughtful process and for sharing of material resources to do the research. In turn these methods arise out of careful thinking about power and control, a commitment to empowerment, and clarity about forms of oppression such as race, class, gender, disability and sexual orientation as they intersect with the research aims, methods and outcomes.

C. Action research and epistemology

At the same time as participatory and action based research movements were flourishing in several parts of the world, there were significant epistemological challenges to the positivist mainstays of rationality, objectivity and truth associated with conventional social science research, each of which contributed to the development of what is now known as the action research paradigm. Indeed a number of the earlier descriptions of participatory research describe it as challenging the way knowledge is produced by conventional social science

methods and the way it is disseminated by educational, social and cultural institutions (Kassam, 1982; Participatory Research Network, 1982). Action researchers have critiqued research which does not engage practice; at the same time they have been thoughtfully engaged in epistemological issues undergirding social research (Greenwood & Levin, 1998).

1. Beyond the language turn: action and theory

The focus on people as active participants in research about their own worlds arises out of critique of and resistance to the Western myth of the professional expert and neutral academic researcher as the only provider of legitimate knowledge (Brooks & Watkins, 1994; Gummesson, 1991; Rahman, 1993). This focus is a different epistemological standpoint, in that the research relationship is not that of subject-object in which the researcher observes the researched in some apparently value-free and detached way. Rather, researchers are called to work in a new paradigm (Reason, 1988) from a subject-subject relationship, developing others as co-researchers, and acknowledging that all research is driven by values and ideological standpoints (Rahman, 1993).

Most action and participatory research is based in an epistemology of social constructionism. Action researchers are aware that the phenomena they are inquiring about are constructed, and that those 'facts' of social life are understandings formalised through our interactions (Elden & Levin, 1991; Hart & Bond, 1995). Reason and Bradbury (2001) describe this as an acceptance of the 'language turn', that is an acceptance that knowledge is socially constructed, and the use of a range of sociocultural theories based on language (Zaretsky, 1994), and at the same time, a movement toward action, that is the 'action turn'.

The 'action turn' asks us "how we can act in intelligent and informed ways in a socially constructed world" (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p.2). Reason and Torbert (2001) argue that action research has not yet fulfilled the promise set out in the action turn it espouses, because it remains caught in the empirical positivist call for academic knowledge to be of value for its own sake. To go beyond the

language turn would mean inquiry becoming much wider than has been the habit of academia, and more meaningful for more diverse audiences.

Debates continue about the relationship of action research to the production of knowledge. For example, some argue that the main aim of action research is to produce better practice (Elliot, 1991), while others argue that it can and should aim to produce knowledge also (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). Action researchers do not claim to make context-free knowledge, but suggest that some knowledge has a kind of transferability in which what has been learnt in one place and time may be useful in thinking about another place and time (Greenwood & Levin, 1998).

At least to some extent, such discussion continues to maintain the Western dichotomy between knowledge and action, or theory and practice, despite the clear linking of reflection/knowledge and action/practice within the action research literature.

2. Ways of knowing

Within action research writing, there has often been a sense that there are many ways of knowing, many kinds of knowledge. For example, action researchers have increasingly written about their commitments to honouring ways of knowing not based solely in the intellect of the individual. Pyrch and Castillo (2001), in their telling of participatory action research stories, provide a celebration of knowing which is intuitive, soulful, quiet, bound to the earth and experience, indigenous and local, metaphorical, old and new at once. Most significantly, the stories they tell and the knowledge they share arise out of a "powerful connection" with others (2001, p.381). From a number of positions, calls have been made to honour knowing through our bodies and senses, and through our ecology (Reason, 1994) and to honour holistic knowing (Reason, 1988). Many action researchers have also drawn on elaborations of knowing provided in feminist theory, as is described below.

Many action researchers focus on stories or narratives (Reason & Hawkins, 1988), paralleling a shift in qualitative social science to constructing human knowledge as storied (Somers & Gibson, 1994). Community organising for social change also relies on stories as key examples of meaning-making (Fairfax, 2000). Park (2001) notes that action research also draws on people's knowledge through art, photography, video, theatre, oral history, music, dance and other media; that is it draws on all forms of meaning-making.

Reason and Torbert (2001) argue for an interweaving and engagement with more than one form of knowing. They describe knowing as experiential, presentational, prepositional and practical, and valid inquiry as finding synchronicity among these. Experiential knowledge happens through direct encounter with others, through a sense of the presence of something other than self, through an empathetic response, and through the co-creation of the world through mutual encounter. It is the ground upon which other forms of knowing develop. Presentational knowing is the way in which we image experiential knowing through metaphor, analogy and aesthetic creation; that is through symbolic meaning-making. Propositional knowing uses concepts, theories, formulae, models, and systems to describe the world. Practical knowing means knowing how to act to achieve something. At its best, practical knowing uses all of the above forms of knowing to accomplish something intentionally.

Park (1999; 2001) draws together a number of themes in action research writing about knowledge, to outline three forms of knowledge (in addition to objective knowledge which describes and understands phenomena as objects) which he sees as necessary to creating new kinds of knowledge and possibilities for people and communities. Representational knowledge includes both functional and interpretive knowing about the world. Relational knowledge is that knowledge we have of each other, both affectively and cognitively, with both mind and heart, and including embodied knowing. It is particularly significant because of its centrality to building communities, and is based on mutuality, interaction, dialogue and connection:

> Relational knowledge grows out of active communal life, and conversely, it is relational knowledge that makes it possible to create and sustain a

> community. This is the dual import of relational knowledge for participatory research. (Park, 2001, p.86)

Strengthening community ties through relational knowledge is a profound outcome of action research which also helps create other forms of knowledge (Park, 1999).

Reflective knowledge involves people, individually and in groups, in thinking about the morals and values which they bring to their lives and their actions for social change. Park (2001) argues that action is part of reflective knowledge. Through both praxis and critical engagement, reflective knowledge implies an intent to be transformative. The notions of reflection and reflexivity are discussed in greater depth below.

3. First, second and third person research

Recent descriptions of action research describe research practice and knowledge-making in terms of first person, second person and third person inquiry (Reason, 2001; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Reason & Torbert, 2001; Torbert, 2000; Torbet, 1999).

First person research practice is close to the approaches of mindful inquiry (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998) and living life as inquiry (Marshall, 1999, 2001) described in Chapter 4. It includes the researcher inquiring into his or her own life, the researcher's awareness of self, and of his or her actions in the world. Second person research practice includes all of the inquiring we do with others through dialogue and the establishment of communities of inquiry, about issues that mutually concern us. Third person research extends first and second person research to political events, by widening the possibilities for who may also know through the research. Written reports of the process and outcome of action research are one form of third person research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001).

Reason and Torbert (2001) call for first, second and third person research to be interwoven through critical subjectivity, compassionate inter-subjectivity and constructive objectivity, in order to achieve a transformative social science in

which the experience of individuals themselves and in relationship with others is placed at the centre, but also contributes to theory-building and social change.

4. Action research and validity

The question of validity in social science in general is an intricately contested debate. Certainly, there are complex issues of validity in knowledge-making through action research. How do action researchers know they are doing 'good work'? Bradbury and Reason contribute to the debate by suggesting that the dialogue about validity should continue to shift from a concern with the nature of truth claims, and therefore well away from positivist notions of validity, to a concern with "engagement, dialogue, pragmatic outcomes and an emergent, reflexive sense of what is important" (2001, p.447). In their significant discussion on validity in action research they develop a set of choice points or key questions which they suggest action researchers need to attend to, and which are used later in this thesis in Chapter 12 as a guide for my reflection on the validity of this inquiry. In specific action research projects, some of the questions will have more salience than others.

First, does the action research allow the development of, and engagement with questions of emergence and enduring consequence? Is the research sustained over a significant period of time, and is there significant engagement of the researcher with him or herself, and with others? Is the inquiry likely to continue without the presence of the initiating researcher?

Second, what are the pragmatic outcomes of the research? Does the research affect practice? Has it changed the way people do things for the better? Have others found it useful and helpful? Have the researchers and participants been reflexive about the usefulness of the research? What is the value of what is being accomplished?

Third, does the research draw on a number of ways of knowing? How are those forms of knowing related? Are they significant and appropriate? Are different ways of knowing allowed to surface? How have different ways of knowing

affected the presentation of the research? How is the knowing grounded in experience? Is the research engaging, thought-provoking, interesting? Are the methods used appropriately and creatively in the context of the research? How are first, second and third person research interwoven?

Fourth, what is the quality of the relational practice, of the interaction in the research? What is the relationship between the initiators and participants? How has participation been enacted and teased out? In what ways has a democratic inquiry process been developed? What have been the choice-points in power dynamics in the research relationships? Have people been energised and empowered through the research? Have others become more reflexive? The best action and participative research animates a set of rich interconnections among those involved, and a sense of mutual engagement (Reason & Goodwin, 1999).

Fifth, has the research addressed questions about significance? What values undergird the research? How do these contribute to human flourishing? Was the research worthwhile, significant, important? Were the research questions of significance? Do others wish to use the research in their own inquiries? (Bradbury & Reason, 2001)

Bradbury and Reason (2001) point out that these questions are overlapping, large and demanding; that most action research projects are emergent, messy, and concerned with different questions at different times; and that different people tend to focus on different questions. They suggest that community meetings are needed at certain points to attend to some of these questions or make significant choices and reflect on those choices. They also suggest that attending to all of the questions, at least to reflect on which are the most significant in a particular project, may well be worthwhile.

In the next chapter I present some of the most recent developments in action research, by describing the key tenets of action research and the debates which surround them, contributions and issues around the intersections between feminism and action research, and issues raised through invoking both a poststructural and an action research framework.

Chapter 4

Issues in action research: challenges and possibilities from feminist and poststructural theory

A. Introduction

In this chapter I outline the key principles of and recent developments within action research, and raise some issues and debates around each of those principles. This is followed by a discussion of the contributions of feminist theory and methodology to action research, including recent questions about the ways in which action research may or may not maintain specific gender relations. Last, a discussion is presented of some of the preliminary intersections, possibilities and challenges which become evident when setting side-by-side the discourses of poststructural theory and action research, and when positioning action research as a discourse.

B. Principles of action research

In this section I outline the particular principles of action research which became significant in this inquiry, and some of the tensions around each of these principles: participation; praxis, liberation and transformation; reflection and reflexivity; action research as inquiry; action research and spirituality.

1. Participation

The notion of participation varies widely in writing about participatory and action research. Some researchers focus on participation in meaning-making.

Others focus on participation as the opportunity to collectively exert control over research process, action and outcomes (Rahman, 1993). Some note that participation is not either present or not present but occurs on a contimuum (Tolley & Bentley, 1996). Greenwood, Foote and Harkavy (1993) suggest that the degree of participation depends on the character of the problem worked with, the environmental conditions, the aims and capacity of the research team, and the skills of the researcher. They point out that participation cannot be imposed. Participation is both a process and a goal, an intent and an outcome.

There has been much exploration of the ways participatory research may not be participatory. Rahman, for example, warns against the "presumption of superiority of middle-class educated activists" (1993, p.153). Some writers note that not all people are equally resourced to participate (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000a; Rahman, 1993). New forms of dependence may also be created through action research. A community may become dependent on the researcher for example. These new dependencies mitigate against participation in search of self-determination (Rahman, 1993). Participation may be used instrumentally to achieve the researcher's aims, rather than as a reflection of a philosophy of collaboration or empowerment.

The ideal of equal participation between academic researcher and co-researchers is, in practice, difficult to attain (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000a; George, 1996; Rahman, 1993). Cancian (1993) suggests that many participatory researchers located in academic institutions still tend to control research questions and methods as a way of producing 'academically acceptable research', while simultaneously finding other ways to maintain their community activism. Hondagnu-Sotelo (1993) outlines a number of reasons why participatory research might sometimes be more useful when researchers aim for advocacy rather than co-researcher participation, so that groups of people involved remain safe.

In some circumstances, such as an action inquiry within an overtly hierarchical organisation, participation may be particularly challenging and needs to be crafted to that particular context (Mead, 2002). In addition, a close examination of the politics and practices of the participation is in itself insightful and

engendering of change. Martin (1996) uses a poststructural perspective to suggest that power, and therefore the possibility of participation, is exercised and moves fluidly between and among researcher and research community. Exploring that tension may be part of the ethical reflection required of researchers aiming for participatory practice, and struggling to explore the ways in which their research might both work for and against injustice and liberation or transformation (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000a; Martin, 1996).

Reason, along with a number of other writers (for example Heron & Reason, 1997; Reason, 1994a; Reason, 1998a), has built a case over the last decade for grounding participation in a participative worldview:

> A participative methodology needs to rest on a participative worldview. It is not possible simply to tag co-operative inquiry or participatory action research onto a world-view that is primarily forged in a positivist or modernist perspective with its deep rooted assumptions about the separation of knower from what is known; this would result in an untenable situation, with methodologies which demand a collaborative ethos and practice resting on assumptions that demand separation. (Reason, 1994b, p.2)

This participative world view is political, epistemological, ecological and spiritual (Reason, 1998b). It is a participative worldview that provides a standpoint from which any person may become an inquirer. Yet, this is a standpoint not felt by all, since control of the right to inquire or to know is fundamental to oppression and alienation (Goff, 2001).

It is often argued that taking a participative approach should be liberating. However, participatory and action research can also be used, perhaps inadvertently, to construct and maintain a continuing domination over the means of knowledge-production, thereby serving only to maintain oppression. As participatory action research becomes intellectually respectable, indeed worthy of elite status, professionalised and institutionalised, there is the potential both for maintaining old world orders, contributing to new forms of oppression, and widening social transformation.

2. Praxis, liberation and transformation

Given an acknowledgement that people can and do reflect on their worlds and find their own ways, research which aims at social transformation, or human flourishing, or improving the world, should therefore be predicated on participation. Much of the action research literature draws on a range of related concepts such as emancipation, liberation, transformation, development, empowerment, and, most recently, in the *Handbook of Action Research*, "human flourishing" (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p.1). Reason and Bradbury draw these together to suggest a prime purpose of action research, which is "to liberate the mind, body and spirit in the search for a better, freer world" (2001, p.2). Liberation and transformation are invoked in a number of ways.

Liberation is argued to include the right to assert people's own existing knowledge (Freire, 1982). Rahman calls for a people's praxis; that is the "people's own systematic review and evaluation of their ongoing experience" (1993, p.67). This is a deliberate inversion of the accepted Western practice in which practitioners learn a body of knowledge from scholars, which is legitimated through their academic training, and then apply it to human problems. Practice, in this paradigm, is the problem of correctly applying theory (Brooks & Watkins, 1994). Such challenges are part of a now well-established scepticism about science, grand solutions and epic tales of Western academia (Brooks & Watkins, 1994). In contrast, praxis is the continuous interplay between doing something, our practice, and re-thinking what ought to be done (Noffke, 1995; Noffke & Stevenson, 1995). Praxis includes understanding the value-laden nature of practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2000).

Rahman (1993) sees human creativity as the outcome of thinking and action. Reflection on action provides a sense of creativity, and it is this sense of creativity which is human development. For him, liberation is about liberating creativity. He notes that for many poor women such liberation includes liberation from male oppression and often requires separate women's organisations, so that women may think and act independently of the men they are believed to be subordinate to. Liberation includes eliminating economic and

social oppression and injustice, and achieving equitable use of public resources. It involves an awareness of class struggle and collective power. Outsiders (researchers) can bring knowledge of rights to public resources, facilitate assessment of strengths for collective action, and raise consciousness of what can be learnt through unsuccessful action, for future action. They can focus on stimulating people's reflection and analysis. He calls for self-reliance at both grass roots and national level.

Greenwood and Levin (1998) advocate for action research because it offers tools and space for democratic social change. They reject the notion of democratic change as about consensus, but see it as a process whereby groups of people, with all their diversity, are able to solve their own problems and control their own contexts. Sherman and Torbert suggest that transformation comes out of inquiry and action which has been built on "mutual vulnerability, mutual imaginativeness, mutual accountability, mutual self-correction, and mutual empowerment" (2000, pp.5-6), which form the basis of trust and knowledge about real-world conditions important to people.

Recently, Pyrch and Castillo (2000) suggest that the liberatory traditions embedded in action research, particularly participatory action research with its commitment to combining academic and people's knowledge and action, are linked to grassroots postmodernism. They suggest that liberation in action research can contribute to the many successful, local and small scale resistances to the globalising and standardising of human activity "for the convenience of the financial and economic elites of the world" (p. 379). Thus they clearly locate contemporary oppression in globalisation, and liberation or resistance in local, incomplete and "uncontrollable" knowledge, and the practice of "'power-with' and 'power-from-within' rather than 'power-over'" (p.379).

Despite the ferment of writing within action research about liberation and transformation, others have noted that not all action research has liberatory aims. Indeed much of it may be about maintaining the status quo more effectively, usually through better management:

> This distinction has become common in discussions about action technologies, casting one type of action inquiry as a handmaiden of industry and another type as an agent of freedom for the oppressed. Put bluntly, the question is whose interests does the action technology serve? (Brooks & Watkins, 1994, p.12)

Some suggest that social reality is more complex than this kind of dualism suggests, and that action research may be useful to all social classes (Brooks & Watkins, 1994).

Some action researchers from liberatory perspectives question the cooption of the action research paradigm for conservative purposes. Gaventa and Cornwall (2001), for example, analyse the inherent risks of large scale international development organisations taking up participatory approaches while maintaining their own hierarchical, inflexible and non-participatory structures. Similarly action research academics often struggle to maintain their work within elitist and hierarchical academic institutions (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). Maguire (2001) notes that

> the tensions of celebration and caution pull in opposite directions. On the one hand the recent successes of legitimizing action research as an approach to knowledge creation gives those of us committed to participatory, experiential, action-oriented research much to celebrate. We have pried open the former strangle hold of positivist research, never to turn back. Action research is used in settings ranging from social justice organizations to multinational corporations, from formal schools to community-based literacy efforts, from human services to for-profit businesses, from international development agencies to social services, and from hospitals to prisons. On the other hand, the question nags, is action research being coopted into a depoliticized tool for "improving practice" devoid of critical understanding of power relations and structures. Improving our practice for whose purposes, whose benefit? The danger of delinking action research from its transformational potential and emancipatory intentions is worrisome. (Maguire, 2002, p.263)

Much of the early participatory research was developed for and with oppressed people in third world countries (Gummesson, 1991). Some years ago, Fals-Borda (1985) cautioned against the cooption of participatory approaches by elite Western groups. Meyer (1993) also cautions against the use of the language of participation and the friendships of action research in serving the interests of the researcher.

3. Reflection and reflexivity

Reflection has been cited as a necessary part of action research for many years. More recently the notion of reflexivity has also gained ground within action research. The two terms, although related, tend to draw on different theoretical traditions, and are used in different ways.

Reflection emerged as a significant activity within professional practitioner discourses, such as social work and education (Fook, 2002). Many writers draw on Schon's (1983) work in which he characterises reflective practice and reflection-in-action as crucial for professional practice, particularly in professions in which situations are more complex than those for which a technical rationality might be useful. To be a reflective practitioner is to be aware of the way problems are framed, of our own humanity and of appropriate responses to problems. 'Reflection' refers to deliberate, careful thinking about issues in all their complexity. In professional contexts, reflective practice includes acting towards clients in a considered and thoughtful way (Payne, 2002).

There are a number of ways the term reflection is used in the action research literature. Most commonly, reflection is cited as part of a cycle of inquiry in which it informs and is informed by action. This perspective tends to draw on the professional notion of the reflective practitioner. Elliot, for example, suggests that it is the reflective practice within action research for educational purposes which builds "practical wisdom" in teachers facing complex situations (1991, p.52).

Some writers have developed the notion of reflection in action research further, suggesting that reflection involves action researchers and co-researchers seeking to understand the construction of their assumptions, to think about their own thinking, to pose new problems or different frames which may offer different questions and solutions (Brooks & Watkins, 1994). Bolton (2001) writes that reflective practice is about examining our personal experiences, including their location in political and social structures. She critiques reflection in action research because it is based on the assumptions that reflection involves a path from ignorance to enlightenment, and that knowing more about ourselves and the world will improve ourselves and our world.

The latter kinds of discussions within action research have been influenced by other work on the more complex notion of reflexivity. 'Reflexivity' tends to be referred to within critical theory, social science research discourse, particularly ethnographic and qualitative research (Fook, 2002), and poststructural theory (as is discussed in Chapter 2). Reflexivity is argued to require reflection, but to go beyond it also (Payne, 2002). It refers to a habit of thinking about our thinking and knowing, our positions as knowers, our readings of the world and their interplay with our actions.

Ristock and Pennell (1996) suggest that the feminist and emancipatory research literature tends to construct reflexivity as "self-consciousness with the goal of establishing non-exploitive relationships between the researcher and the communities researched" (p.48). This construction relies on the construction of power as something possessed by some, which is to be shared with others in an emancipatory fashion (Barraket, 1999). Using a Foucauldian conception of power gives rise to an altered sense of reflexivity, in which researchers are concerned to think about themselves in relation to what they know, the effects of their actions on what is known, and the ways meaning and understanding are produced through the research. There is still a concern to avoid exploitation, but this happens instead through self-consciousness and understanding of the exercise of power.

Both reflection and reflexivity have been extended within recent writing about action research as a form of inquiry.

4. Action research as inquiry

Over the last several years, many action research writers have begun using the term 'inquiry', usually paired with action in the phrase 'action inquiry', and/or in writing about a personal approach to the way they choose to live their lives, within which their approach to research is embedded. Inquiry, then, is invoked as a broader term than research, with connotations of a personal commitment to certain ways of being and knowing. It could be seen as a way of de-linking action research from other traditional forms of academic research, or of resisting the connotations of positivism often present in the term 'research'.

Reason, for example, writes about his perspective on human inquiry:

> I see this as an approach to living based on experience and engagement, on love and respect for the integrity of persons; and on a willingness to rise above presupposition, to look and look again, to risk security in the search for understanding and action that open possibilities of creative living. ...I use the term *human inquiry* to encompass all those forms of research which aim to move beyond the narrow positivistic and materialist world-view which has come to characterize the latter portion of the twentieth century. While holding on to the scientific ideals of critical self-reflective inquiry and openness to public scrutiny, the practices of human inquiry engage deeply and sensitively with experience, are participative, and aim to integrate action with reflection. (Reason, 1994b, pp.9-10)

Reason (1994) characterises participative inquiry practices as a response to Western dualism, reductionism and individualism, in which individuals are separate and autonomous, knowing is considered to be objective and separate from knowers, and the world is known through information about its apparent constituent parts.

Action inquiry addresses issues of effectiveness and justice in outcomes of action, and the quality of our own attention to the action and the inquiry (Reason, 1994a). Fisher and Torbert link an action inquiry approach to personal and organisational transformation:

> By action inquiry we mean a kind of behaviour that is simultaneously inquiring and productive. It is behaviour that simultaneously learns about the developing situation, accomplishes whatever task appears to have priority, and invites a redefining of the task if necessary.
>
> When truly practised, action inquiry enhances the actor's as well as the organisation's efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy. (1995, p.13)

Sherman and Torbert describe researchers engaged in transforming action inquiry as "observant participants seeking to join with other participants in creating a community of inquiry where all are both participating and inquiring" (2000, p.6). Torbert (2000) extends the concept to argue for a cooperative ecological inquiry, which both creates communities of inquiry which bridge subjectivities and differences, and supports peaceful and ecologically sensitive transformation.

Marshall (1999; 2001) writes of living her life as inquiry, of research as both political and life process, and of self-reflective practice being necessarily at the heart of all inquiry. Bentz and Shapiro (1998) also take up the notion of inquiry as a way of being a person and a researcher, in their development of the concept of 'mindful inquiry'. They draw on phenomenology, hermeneutics, critical social science and Buddhism, to develop the concept of mindful inquiry, a term encapsulating their belief that "good research should contribute to your development as a mindful person, and your development as an aware and reflective individual should be embodied in your research" (p.5). They argue that mindfulness conveys a tolerance of other frames of reference, built on an understanding that we are immersed in and shaped by historical, economic, political and cultural structures and constraints. Those structures are implicated in oppression and therefore suffering, and alleviating suffering should be central to human inquiry. Inquiry may also contribute to spiritual development and social action. To be a mindful researcher is both to examine the political,

cultural, historical and economic context, and to be aware of self, ego, psyche, emotional and embodied experiences. The poststructural notions of reflexivity appear to be embodied in these approaches to living life as inquiry and mindful inquiry.

These evocations of inquiry are idealistic and appealing. They evoke the possibility of transformation, and for all of the reasons described above, I have chosen to describe the work presented in this thesis as an 'action inquiry'. However, it is important to note the cautions which have also been expressed about the use of this language. Reason's work, in particular, has been criticised for omitting political economy, and for continuing a grand narrative of the evolution of human consciousness (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). It may be that in some of this writing, particularly that of Torbert and Reason, a grand narrative is being constructed, albeit a revised version of the positivist narrative of science. Greenwood and Levin (1998) point out, however, that such a narrative is still important for the kind of inquiry it makes possible.

5. Action research and spirituality

Recently, writers have begun to include spirituality in their comments about the nature and purpose of action research. Reason and Bradbury, for example, suggest that theory developed through action research can help us "contemplate our spiritual purposes" (2001, p.2). Pyrch and Castillo write movingly of the need to create spaces

> for the mutual exchange of wisdom between academic inquirers and local or indignenous voices. Those voices can be hard to hear because they speak to that part of us hidden by the rational imperative that has highlighted the scientific revolution; the voices are sometimes so well-hidden that recovery sometimes seems impossible. We refer to our hidden intuitive, metaphoric and spiritual qualities still devalued by many gatekeepers of official and expert knowledge although welcome within the action research family. (2001, p.379)

Reason (1994) suggests that the purpose of human inquiry is to heal or to make whole, and to make whole is also to make holy or sacred, to be aware again of

the mysterious and the numinous. A sacred science would be concerned with this kind of healing, through love, beauty, wisdom and engagement, critical self-reflexive consciousness, and a deep experience of the sacred (Reason, 1993).

McNiff (2000) suggests that action research provides an opportunity to recognise and value spirituality, including connectedness, belonging, love and peace. Some action research writers, particularly those who advocate for first person inquiry or methods of personal reflection, also advocate for spiritual practices as forms of inquiry. Torbert (2000), for example, suggests that first person research can include meditation and prayer.

A few action or participatory research projects take up an explicitly Christian perspective. Nash (1993), for example, explores the potential of church-based organising in the United States as a form of participatory research, and concludes that participatory researchers could learn much from community organising. In a courageous study in the small rural community of Ivanhoe in Virginia, Hinsdale, Lewis and Waller (1995) describe a five-year community development project in which they worked with local people organising to revitalise their town. A crucial part of the community development in this town, which had been hit by years of deindustrialisation and economic restructuring, was the gradual realisation by the community of their own 'local theology'. A liberation theology approach was explicitly part of the conscientization process in the town, a process which led to local people demanding to participate in the planning and direction of their community.

There appear to be few other action research projects which deal directly with action research as Christian practice or Christian practice as action research, apart from the occasional mention of prayer as first person inquiry. Similarly, there appears to be little writing or research which explores the intersections between Christian theology and action research, although even just a cursory glance at the ideals implicit and expressed in liberation and feminist theology in particular might suggest there would be considerable synergy with participatory and action research.

C. Feminist research and action research

Action research has roots in liberatory perspectives, particularly those of gender and race (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). In this section, I describe feminist challenges to action research theory and practice, and the contributions of various feminisms to action research. Locating myself as a feminist and action researcher meant that the intersections between these sets of ideas and practices were played out through the inquiry described in this thesis. I also raise some issues regarding the part action research may play in maintaining current gender systems.

1. A challenge from feminist research

Patricia Maguire (1987) has made a sustained feminist challenge to action researchers, beginning by challenging the andocentric nature of action research and the lack of acknowledgement of the contribution of feminist thinking to the development of participatory and action research:

> Participatory research acknowledges the centrality of power in the social construction of knowledge. But it is feminist research which alerts us to the centrality of male power in that construction, a power which participatory research too often ignores. (Maguire, 1996. p.30)

More recently, Maguire (2001) suggests that real engagement by action researchers with the various feminisms is still rare and uneven. A number of other feminist action researchers have added to this challenge.

2. Contributions from feminist theory

Participatory and action research has been a "field strangely populated by men" (Treleaven, 1994, p.141), and yet the field has also been strongly influenced by feminist researchers, often writing from feminist or marginal positions in other disciplines. Indeed, Greenwood and Levin (1998) suggest that it is the feminist anticanonical and antipositivist critique of social science which provided an

opening for the development of participatory and action research theory and practice.

Most recent feminist research includes some of the following characteristics, some of which are also embedded in various ways within action and participatory research discourse: social activism and the possibility of transformation of oppression; praxis, including an acknowledgement of and working within the local context, and a sharing of aims and commitment to outcomes among researcher and research community; attention to relationships, reflexivity and the emotion involved in research, together with a decrease in the researcher's control over the research and an acknowledgement that there is no great divide between objects and subjects in research; analysis of the workings of gender and the possibilities for unsettling those workings; and an interest in voice, power and knowledge-making (Fonow, 1990; Fonow & Cook, 1991; George, 1996). These contributions from feminist theory and research practice to action research are described more fully in the following paragraphs.

a. Transformation

Feminist research, like much participatory and action research, has included a clear intent for social change particularly where oppression is gendered: "the purpose of feminist research must be to create new relationships, better laws and improved institutions" (Reinharz, 1992, p.176). It is the desire for transformation which continues to give life to feminist praxis (Ahmed, Kilby, Lury, McNeil, & Skeggs, 2000).

Lather (1986; 1991) argues for an action research which is informed by critical theory including feminist theory. McTaggart (1991) suggests that participatory action research should be about improving the lives of others. Miller (1994), a feminist sociologist and participatory action researcher, questions the simplicity of the notion of improving the lives of others when the outcomes of participatory action research are so unpredictable, and when agreeing on the nature and direction of desired change is also fraught with difficulty.

b. Praxis

Lather (1986; 1991), among other feminist theorists, forged a strong link between critical theory and empirical research by calling for praxis-oriented research which acknowledges its values base and seeks to contribute to emancipatory action. Many feminist researchers have also brought to the action research field their considerable skills in producing knowledge for action, or praxis, particularly from the community, health and welfare sectors (Treleaven, 1994). The rural development work of Swantz and colleagues in Tanzania, for example, is built on the deliberate and public involvement of women in analysing their own situations and participating in the consequent planning and implementation (Swantz et al., 2001). Feminist research is often built on an understanding of women's everyday experience and feelings as a source of knowledge (Maguire, 2001). Feminist approaches to action research as praxis tend to draw on the lived experiences of the women involved (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000a; Treleaven, 1994).

c. Relationships, reflexivity and emotion

In a similar vein to action researchers, feminist researchers have emphasised the importance of establishing equal relationships between researcher and researched, precisely because of their experience of subordination within a patriarchal society. However, feminist participatory action researchers have also written about the difficulty of establishing such equal relationships (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000a) and of clarifying the roles of the initiating researcher (Miller, 1994). Many feminist researchers understand that knowledge and power are created and animated within relationships, an understanding particularly significant for action and participatory researchers (Maguire, 2001).

Feminist academics also call on researchers to examine their own positions as researchers, to become more reflexive about the constructedness and subjectivity of their own knowledge-making (Brooks & Watkins, 1994). Within the participatory research literature, many have similarly noted the significance of including the researcher's lived experience in sense-making and the congruence of that intent with feminism (Group for collaborative inquiry thINQ, 1994; Miller, 1994; Treleaven, 1994). Feminist praxis questions the privilege of the

researcher's voice in relation to the voices of often silenced women (see, for example, Fonow & Cook, 1991; Greenwood & Levin, 1998). Such questioning is a mandate for critical reflection by researchers on who or how their research may silence.

Miller (1994) comments on the pain which can be involved in such personal involvement and self-reflection. Feminist researchers also often share their own painful life stories in research discussions, an indication of the mutuality fundamental to relationship building for participatory research (Gatenby & Humphries, 1999, 2000a; George, 1996). Feminist researchers have also noted the emotion which can be involved in participating in research projects (Gatenby & Humphries, 1999, 2000a; Kirkwood, 1993). In participatory action research, the outcomes and the process may not be uplifting and rewarding for all participants; for some they may even be painful (Miller, 1994).

d. Voice and feminist action research

Feminists have often used the metaphor of voice and/or silence to articulate the workings of oppression, and have used the notions of giving or claiming voice or examining silence as a form of activism. Feminist action research can come from a position of paying attention to women's voices, of creating space for women's voices, and of examining what may be unspeakable, discounted, or uncounted (Gatenby & Humphries, 1999; Maguire, 2001). Some feminist researchers are also well aware that speaking what has been unspeakable may not necessarily be transformative or even safe (Gatenby & Humphries, 1999). Gaining voice (or choosing silence) often goes hand in hand with realising that knowledge is socially and discursively constructed, and that therefore what we 'know' can be challenged. This realisation unlocks the transformative potential of a feminist grounded action research (Maguire, 2001).

3. Race, gender and action research

If gender has been largely invisible in action research, race may be even more invisible in action research (Bell, 2001). Bell suggests that in the United States at least, an "eery silence lurks when it comes to discussing action research

techniques to dismantle racial oppression" (2001, p.49). She notes the links between the tenets of the Black liberation movement and the tenets of action research: research as social activism; calls for collaboration between Black social scientists and members of the Black community; close relationships between researchers and subjects; dialogue; participant-determined inquiry; social action orientation; and a focus on everyday life experiences. The roots of action research have been nurtured by progressive research on race and liberation (Bell, 2001).

For some time now, strong calls by women variously described as 'women of colour' have challenged the essentialising of the category 'women' and demanded that Western feminists acknowledge the intertextuality of race, class and culture with gender (Probyn, 2000). Similar calls have been made here in Aotearoa New Zealand. Tuhiwai Smith (1999), for example, cautions against universalising "oppression" as independent of history, context and agency. The oppression of Maori women in this country, for example, has its own unique process, patterns and outcomes. She criticises accounts of emancipatory research such as that of Lather (1991) which fail to acknowledge the different value systems and approaches of organic and indigenous local and world movements and their contributions to both conceptions of emancipatory research and understanding of Western paradigms. Action and participatory researchers in Aotearoa New Zealand need to be constantly alive to the possibilities for maintaining racism and oppression through our research.

Indeed, Bishop (1994; 1996) finds that using an action research and critical theory approach is not enough to do ethical research with Maori. Such research must also grow out of and be located within Maori cultural practices – that is kaupapa Maori research, a notion which has grown through recent decades as part of broader political movements for Maori. Bishop cautions strongly against the "intellectual arrogance of theory driven emancipationists" with their "new form of evangelism" (1994, p.181). In his own research he notes that the Western binary of hegemonic and counter–hegemonic processes did not allow for the complexity and diversity of positions spoken through his ancestors, and their positions and choices.

A participatory research project with indigenous women in Suriname draws on indigenous and women's models of empowerment which acknowledge the centrality of land to empowerment and self-determination. The researchers argue that self-determination and the right to indigenous lands are two basic concepts often ignored in Western development projects, many of which have colonised indigenous lands and people, particularly women (Esa, 1999). Action research itself may be a tool for ongoing colonisation or oppression.

Objections by a number of indigenous writers to the cultural (mis)appropriation of native stories (Keeshig-Tobias, 1997; Ziff & Rao, 1997) also provide a caution for action researchers, particularly those in settings different than their own cultural context, and raise ethical issues regarding the involvement of action researchers in meaning-making and story-telling. The tension between action research as tool of liberation and transformation and action research as tool for ongoing imperialism is but one of a number of tensions within action research as a particular discourse.

4. Gendering action research

Maguire (1987; 1996; 2001) calls for gender to be placed at the centre of feminist participatory research, for the diversity of feminism (and hence feminisms) to be a significant part of the theoretical discussion about action research, and for researchers to pay explicit attention to the gendered nature of every aspect of their research. She notes that feminism has shifted from focussing on women to theorising the workings of gender, and that feminist action research can contribute to understanding the construction, maintenance and transformation of gender relations (Maguire, 2001).

In responding to calls such as that of Maguire, Greenwood and Levin point out that

> AR [action research] should not seek to domesticate feminism or to make polite gestures of incorporation. This is not about the politics of professional inclusion. It is about figuring out how to create a better world. AR should continue to grow, as it has in the past, by learning

> from feminism's profound and detailed analyses of gendered oppression and efforts at gender liberation. (1998, pp.181-182)

Noffke and others (Noffke, 1995; Noffke & Stevenson, 1995) suggest that within the action research field, it has been mostly elite academic men who have theorised about action research, while it has been mostly women who have actually done action research. In this respect, a continued privileging of theory over action, remains gendered and gendering within the field. For Maguire the questions become "how is maleness being reproduced or unsettled in action research?" (2001, p.62) and "how is gendering still at work within action research?" (2001, p.66).

In some of my own work, with Maria Humphries, in a project we labeled feminist participatory action research, we participated with a group of over 70 women in thinking about their careers and the gendering of their lives. Our feminist approach to theorising gender with the women involved enabled us to see both the significance of relationship building in the research, and the complexities of our own subjectivities in what we came to know about the construction of gender through the construction of the notions of 'women' and 'careers' (Gatenby & Humphries, 1996, 1999, 2000a, 2000b). Building supportive and nurturing relationships with and between participants meant creating a space in which gender analysis and social activism could be imagined and spoken. Feminist action research often does include space for nurturing and mutual sharing (Bell, 2001). We also tried to take account of the risk that our action research might silence the Maori women involved by holding open space for them to choose to occupy or not, and trying to find the places for conversation among women of different ethnicities about the intersections of gender and race in career discourse and in the research project itself (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000a). An aspect of our work included using Butler's (1990) notion of unsettling the taken-for-granted binaries of male and female as feminist activist/researchers (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000a). Many feminists have critiqued the Cartesian binaries of mind and body (Harding, 1987), and the related dualisms of theory/practice, male/female, and public/private. These critiques have sometimes been taken up by feminist action researchers wishing to

use action research as a way of unsettling the taken-for-grantedness of gendered difference (Maguire, 2001; Treleaven, 2001).

Some work within action research perspectives fails to reflect women's experiences. For example, the often described sequence of planning, acting, reflecting and planning again, which forms the basis of a number of action science and learning approaches, fails to acknowledge other ways of knowing not located in the rational or intellectual mind. Knowledge may also come through emotions, our bodies, creative expression, dreams, and synchronicity (coincidence to which meaning is given) (Treleaven, 1994). The construction of knowledge happens through dialogue, reciprocity and cooperation, enacted through relationships and conversations (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986).

The very focus on action itself may maintain an andocentric view of the world, including action research. Reason and Bradbury (Reason & Bradbury, 2001) note, in an aside to their discussion of the focus of action research on action and practice, that a feminist perspective might challenge as overly heroic their focus on action without also considering ways of being. Marshall (1984; 2001) offers an alternative to writing and speaking of 'action as male' and 'being as female', by drawing on Bakan's (1966) notions of agency and communion as one of her own frameworks for professional practice and inquiry.

'Agency' and 'communion' are two ways of responding to the uncertainty of our lives. Agency refers to a way of living which is assertive, in control of our environment, independent, and protective of ourselves. Communion, on the other hand, is a way of being which emphasises connections, integration, process, and interdependence. It is a sense of being 'at one' with other living beings (Bakan, 1966). To extend the metaphor, agency and communion may be complementary or at odds with one another. We move between them and can choose to pay attention to the interplay of the two (Marshall, 1984; 2001).

D. Action research and poststructural theory: some issues and questions

Through the course of the research described in this thesis, and as I read the action research literature, my thinking was often provoked by a number of tensions and possibilities which emerged. In particular, these emerged through locating myself as an action researcher working from a poststructural epistemology. These tensions were enacted and embodied in and through me throughout the inquiry, and are reflected on further in Part III in light of the inquiry which emerged. In the next paragraphs, I discuss poststructural influences on action research and reflect in a preliminary way on the questions which arise if we consider action research as a discourse.

1. Poststructural influences on action research

A number of recent themes in the action research literature suggest that action research discourse is being influenced to some extent by poststructural theorising. For example, ideas about reflexivity in research have clearly extended and strengthened earlier work on reflection in action research. In particular, action researchers appear to have been encouraged through the invocation of first person research and research as inquiry to examine their position in the research, to begin to do what poststructural theorists might frame as examining their own subjectivity. Such work is also encouraging some action researchers to articulate the subject positions made possible for others through participation in action research. However, like Lennie, Hatcher and Morgan (2003), I suspect that further work is possible about the subject positions contested and claimed as action researchers possessing particular knowledge and therefore exercising certain kinds of power and truth-making.

Action researchers have increasingly engaged with notions of power in relation to knowledge. Gaventa and Cornwall (2001) comment that early conceptions of action research tend to locate certain groups (the oppressed, the poor, and so on) as not having power, and other groups as having power. More recently, action

researchers have engaged with the ways in which power is exercised through our research, a question much more aligned with a poststructural epistemology. Goff (2001) suggests, for example, that action research may both maintain oppression, and work against it, while ostensibly being anti-oppressive. It may also make visible oppression within academic and corporate sectors within which our research is often embedded. Regarding action research in this way requires that we make space for deep reflection on our own involvement in oppression, a further aspect of reflexivity.

In general, however, little has been written about the relationship between poststructural theory and action research. However, in one particular study, Lesley Treleaven (1994; 2001) uses a feminist Foucauldian poststructural discourse analysis in engaging with a group of women staff examining the gendered nature of their position in a university. She suggests that paying attention to the language people use, through an analysis of discourse, and its concomitant shaping of their actions, integrates both the language and action turn in a potentially productive way.

Trealeaven's observation is rare. Indeed in other key action research writing, such as that of Reason's and Torbert's, the suggestion is that action research is a call to move beyond the language turn (Reason & Torbert, 2001). In this way, action and language are re-instantiated as a dualism, a dualism challenged by poststructural theory. Within discursive psychology, for example, it is suggested that the distinction between language and action is a false distinction (Edley, 2001).

The recent work described above regarding the ways in which action research is implicated in gendering draws clearly on ideas articulated within feminist poststructural theory to demonstrate the way in which action research may maintain gender oppression. However, linking action research and a feminist poststructuralism may also create spaces for new positions, new voices and new identities, some of the transforming possibilities of discourse analysis (S. Taylor, 2001a). Discourse analysis can be used as a means of political engagement by

researchers in matters of pressing social concern (Wetherell, 2001a), an aim often expressed also by those locating themselves as action researchers.

2. Action research as a discourse

I suggest that action research has been developed as a discourse of resistance to the predominance of positivist social scientific knowledge, methods and instruments of research. This has been a resistance to the particular Enlightenment story, a story Foucault and other poststructuralists have also resisted. The techniques of resistance within action research have been identified traditionally along continua of participation, action, and reflection, and liberation/transformation.

However, the tensions which emerge in the literature around each of its key principles suggest also that action research as a discourse may be viewed by some as being co-opted by other more dominant discourses. Thus, fears are now frequently expressed about the (mis)use of the principles and techniques of action research for oppressive practices and knowledges.

Further, action research may itself act as a dominant discourse in some settings. Understanding the social world as constructed and understood through discourses challenges the 'truth claims' of some of the liberation work conducted under the banner of action research. The question becomes, what does this particular discourse of development, participation and liberation construct, maintain and achieve? While some aspects of action research discourse appear to challenge grand narratives of progress and enlightenment, some writing within action research appears to replace them with new narratives of transformation and participation. McNiff and Whitehead (2000) suggest, for example, that action research stories of transformation often hide the pain involved. It may be useful to ask what it is that action research is normalising. Taking a discourse approach enables us to examine the processes and claims of truth-making within action research. Questions then arise about various aspects of action research such as the invocation of action research as spiritual practice.

These issues are taken up further in Chapter 12, in light of the research described in this thesis. In the next two chapters, I present an analysis of the social, political and economic context within which this research took place.

Chapter 5

Social and economic context for the inquiry

A. Introduction

In this chapter and the next, I set out some ideas and critiques which informed my inquiry at Waikato Anglican Social Services. They provide an academic context for this inquiry and draw on a particular view of the social and political position and work of community based social service organisations such as Waikato Anglican Social Services, in Aotearoa New Zealand. As Munford and Sanders (1999) point out, the context in which social service organisations are embedded affects profoundly the possibilities for the kinds of services they can offer. The chapters provide an understanding of the context of the Agency as a not-for-profit social service in Aotearoa New Zealand, affiliated to the Anglican Church, and offering a new service to women and children.

Understanding the historical context for this inquiry draws too on the Foucauldian notion that our current discourses and institutions emerge through specific historical changes. In the inquiry described in this thesis, an emphasis on historical context stems not from a desire to produce an archaeology (Foucault, 1972), but "from a deep commitment to understanding the present" (Burrell, 1988, p.225). This thesis then, by including an examination of the historical context for the work of the Agency, may also contribute to discussions regarding the possibilities for social justice work within the not-for-profit sector.

This chapter begins with an overview of recent social and economic policy in Aotearoa New Zealand, including social and economic policy for Maori, focussing particularly on neoliberal policies. I then discuss theoretical perspectives of neoliberalism, including its practice through policy, managerialism, the psychology of self, and social control. I also discuss some

points of resistance to neoliberalism, including intersections with a discourse of social justice.

B. Aotearoa New Zealand: social and economic policy

Although the space within which policy evolves is complexly contested from within and by a range of intersecting discourses (Humpage & Fleras, 2001), policy analysts and theorists have drawn together changes over this century and characterised them as representing a significant shift in social and economic policy, often called a shift to neoliberalism. This shift is argued to have occurred particularly through the 1980s and 1990s in Aotearoa New Zealand, and to have affected the work and organisation of social services in this country. I describe these shifts because they provided the context within which the Agency was embedded during the time of this research.

For much of the twentieth century, the development of health, education and social services had been characterised by the rise of the welfare state (Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party, 2001). For several decades immediately prior to the early 1980s, our country was described as a strong welfare state, with social security and social welfare viewed as the responsibility of the state (Baker & Tippin, 1999), though historians now identify gaps in the provision of welfare (Tennant, 2001). Kelsey (1990) suggests that the middle decades were a time of building national identity, and that class, race and gender biases of the economic and political structures were obscured by the pervasiveness of the white, middle-class, two-parent, consumption-oriented family norm.

Social security had been conceived at the start of the twentieth century out of concern about increasing poverty and an increasing separation of the poor from the rest of the community (McClure, 1998). The provision of social security and, over the middle part of the century, a state-provided social welfare system, came out of an ethos which notionally at least viewed citizens as sharing the same life-time risks and common vulnerabilities, and therefore a desire to provide for all,

and to aim toward a unified society (McClure, 1998). Torfing (1999) argues that during this era, the state was constructed as a resource for the vulnerable, and the liberal notion of universal human rights was extended to include social rights. Social policy was matched by economic policy in which the state maintained a strong protectionist policy.

1. Social and economic policy: 1984 - 1999

Between 1984 and 1990, the Labour government began to implement sweeping economic changes, changes which Kelsey (1995) has since labelled 'the New Zealand experiment'. From 1990 to 1999, successive national governments continued the economic reform. The changes were based on a model of neoliberal economic theory, with key principles of market liberalisation, free trade, limited government, privatisation of public services, narrow monetarist policy, fiscal restraint and a deregulated labour market. The rhetoric through which economic rationalism was convincing for the New Zealand public was that 'there was no choice'; economic reform had to occur if the country was not to be bankrupt. The changes were described as common sense and as providing accountability, empowerment and transparency (Kelsey, 1995). Many economists and politicians claimed that the changes would enhance New Zealand's international competitiveness in an increasingly global marketplace (Fleras & Spoonley, 1999). In 1990 and 1991, welfare benefits provided by government were cut drastically, as part and parcel of the economic reform, based on the premise that state withdrawal from welfare provision together with market driven delivery of social services would produce freedom, opportunities and justice.

Many argued that such changes were needed internationally to grow Gross Domestic Profit (Stiglitz, 1999a). The global marketplace was socially constructed as fundamental to the apparent inevitability of economic reform in Aotearoa New Zealand. The changes were part of what Kelsey describes as the grand vision or metanarrative of globalisation (Kelsey, 1999). This vision was expressed most strongly in 1990 by leaders from the United States government, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, in what economist John

Williamson labelled the 'Washington Consensus' (in Hazledine, 1998). The metanarrative of globalisation evoked an interdependent and self-regulating global economy in which goods, capital and ideas flow freely across borders, cultures and politics, purporting to benefit all and provide for well being. In this global economy, nation states were to be minimised in favour of the apparently true and fair market place (Kelsey, 2002). The assumption was that human rights and agency could most effectively be asserted through the position of consumer.

Many people from many different perspectives have provided a critique of the discourse of neoliberal economic reform, including its focus on globalisation. Kelsey (1999), for example, offers an alternative construction of globalisations as highly contested and dynamic processes with uncertain outcomes, and involving competing interests of groups of people, companies, tribes, and governments who variously form alliances, accommodate and contradict each other, and continuously revise their relationships.

Stiglitz (1999a; 1999b) comments that the Washington Consensus has largely been discredited now. Successful economic development has occurred in many countries that did not follow the ideology of neoliberalism, and the promised economic development has not occurred in a number that did. He suggests that the consensus ignored the social institutions which underpin economies, and took privatisation and trade liberalisation as ends in themselves, rather than as a means to sustainable, equitable and democratic growth. He argues for a renewed development model which includes income growth, improvements in living standards, reduction in poverty and complementary roles for private and public sectors.

In Aotearoa New Zealand the promises made by the reformists of improved living standards for all have not materialised. The majority of New Zealanders have lower standards of living than before the reforms and on all kinds of economic measures, the New Zealand economy has been worse than before the reforms (Easton, 1997, 1999). Between 1988 and 1993, the number of people living in poverty doubled. Studies of poverty based on different methods gave consistent findings through the mid 1990s; about one in five New Zealanders and

one in three children were living in poverty (Kelsey, 1999). Poverty had increased, particularly for elderly women and single mothers, and for Maori and Pacific Island families (Stephens, Waldegrave, & Frater, 1995; Waldegrave, Stuart, & Stephens, 1996). In 1998, sole parents had the highest incidence of poverty, with almost 80% living in poverty (Stephens & Waldegrave, 2001).

Wealth in this country had been re-distributed in a very short time, with the wealthiest 10% of people having increased their wealth the most, and only the top 20% having increased their wealth. By 1996, the richest 5% of people in the nation had increased their share of the nation's income since 1984 by 25% (Kelsey, 2002). By 1998, the richest 10% of the nation had increased their income by 42% (Waldegrave & Stephens, 2000). Furthermore, the 10% of the nation with the least wealth had suffered the largest percentage decreases in their income (Kelsey, 1999, 2002).

By the late 1990s, government statisticians were commenting on the widening gap between the rich and the poor in this country, and noting that the gap was increasing faster than in other similar countries (Statistics New Zealand, 1999). Coney (1997) points out that this gap existed too between a small group of very prosperous women and a large and growing group of poor women. At the global level, poverty and inequality had also increased (Pearce, 2000). As Kelsey (1999) points out, however, increased inequity has been seen by some reformists as a positive outcome. Some view such outcomes as evidence of competition working appropriately.

Kelsey (1999) suggests that the neoliberal economic reforms threatened our identities, jobs, communities and the right to control our own lives. Paradoxically, the economic reforms were matched by social policy reforms which were supposed to give people greater autonomy and self-reliance. Some reformists ignored the relationships between rising unemployment, lower disposable incomes created by their economic reforms, and the corresponding increase in 'welfare dependency', which the national Governments of the 1990s were determined to reduce drastically by cutting state spending on welfare

benefits (Baker & Tippin, 1999). Other reformists used the relationship to argue that the reforms had not gone far enough.

As the indicators of growing poverty became more obvious, politicians and social policy analysts had to respond to calls to reduce poverty. Novak (1997) explores the way in which the social construction of poverty reflects those who are defining it, including their gender, role and class, and the way different definitions of poverty serve different groups. At this time, poverty was seen by some as a necessary part of the reform.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, definitions of poverty again became those of absolute need for shelter and food. Individualised explanations of poverty tend to suggest that individuals do not make the right choices in their lives, or have some kind of weakness or failing, such as having too many children, being too lazy to work, or squandering money (Cheyne, O'Brien, & Belgrave, 2000; Novak, 1997). This kind of explanation tends to have a corrosive effect on those described in addition to the multiple effects of poverty itself (Munford, 1997; O'Brien, 1997, 2001).

The preferred explanations of poverty determine the preferred solutions. People positioned within a neoliberal discourse tend to find both reasons and solutions in individuals or households. Poverty or need is seen to be the result of individual choice. Hence, since the mid 1980s, welfare responsibility was shifted from the state to individuals and families (McClure, 1998). Social policy discourses shifted from social security to income support to employability, workfare and community wages (Baker & Tippin, 1999; Cheyne et al., 2000) accompanied by an increase in social control and an exclusion of those constructed as undeserving (Garland, 2001), as is discussed further below.

Reductions in income support over the last two decades were meant to make individuals more self-reliant and more likely to work. An increasing number of feminist analyses of the gendered dimensions of market theory and welfare emerged (Briar & Cheyne, 1998). Low income women in particular faced mixed messages (Baker & Tippin, 1999). Individual choice and responsibility rhetoric

meant they should find paid work; deinstitutionalisation and community care increased their unpaid responsibilities for family members (Coney, 1997), childcare was mostly not available or not affordable, and to be 'good' mothers women should remain at home with their children.

For many, mostly Maori, Pacific Island peoples and some women, the reductions in welfare benefits meant increased poverty. The circumstances of single parents, mainly women, became particularly difficult. The economic and social restructuring marginalised many women, particularly low income women, who are disproportionately represented among Maori and Pacific Island women (Baker & Tippin, 1999). The neo-conservative politics which have gone hand-in-hand with neoliberal economics have included an espousal of Western style monogamous and heterosexual relationships as the basis for two-parent nuclear families (Pratt, 1997), and social policy has reflected those values.

Challenges to neoliberal social policy, particularly in relation to poverty, became more articulate and accessible. Surveys in the late 1990s clearly demonstrated public antipathy to globalisation and deregulation (Kelsey, 2002). Cheyne, O'Brien and Belgrave (2000) note that it was also possible for social policy to work from a definition of relative poverty, and this view gained some ground. This kind of definition recognises that there is a level of poverty which excludes individuals, families and groups from participating and belonging to the society many of us take for granted.

The term 'social exclusion' became a way of referring to this definition of poverty (Cheyne et al., 2000). Billis (2001) reviews the literature on 'social exclusion' and its use in Britain. He notes that it is used in several ways: with a focus on poverty, with a focus on organisations or institutions, and with a focus on 'the fabric of society' in which the interrelationships between groups and collectivities are examined. It has also become a widely used term, along with its opposite 'social inclusion', in all kinds of policy discussion; that is a 'policy current'. Peace (2001) notes that as the concept of 'being excluded' shifted to 'social exclusion', the move from verb to noun signified reification of the construct and the disappearance of the agents or structures of exclusion.

Through this shift, she suggests, the concept can be used both within a neoliberal framework as a means of social control of those labelled using the term, and without acknowledgement of the political context of the exclusion. However, she also suggests that it can be used to enhance "opportunity, reciprocity and participation" (p.33).

Structural explanations of poverty provide a focus on the inability of an economic and or social system to deliver adequate income for all. Some of these explanations also take into account inequities in specific groups defined by gender, ethnicity or class. O'Brien (1997; 2001) argues that we need to understand the ways poverty affects people's lives and its connections with child abuse, youth offending, the needs of disabled people, violence, and so on. Kelsey (2002) suggests, however, that neoliberal attempts to alleviate poverty enabled the wealthy to talk about how they could assist the poor without questioning the social, economic and political sources of their poverty.

2. Social and economic policy, 1999-present: the third way

In 1999, a Labour/Alliance coalition government was elected and then a Labour government re-elected in 2002. The new government signalled a shift to a 'third way', similar to political shifts in both Britain and the United States, based particularly on the theoretical work of Giddens (1998). Those who support the third way tend to view it as a centre-left approach which is neither the *lassez faire* capitalism of the right, nor the statist regulation of the left (Chatterjee et al., 1999). It is constructed as acknowledging the apparent reality of politics in a global economy, by persisting with the view that liberalised international trade based on fair and equitable rules of engagement is preferable to economic nationalism and protectionism (Chatterjee et al., 1999).

The third way is often presented as a return to 'community' or to 'community values', implying some kind of collective commitment to well being and a more participatory democracy. However, some theorists suggest that it is a return to community of a particularly normative kind, based on British Victorian concepts of family and community (Dale, 1998). The 'third way' draws on core liberal

values of equal opportunity, rights linked to responsibilities, and autonomous individuals regulated by wider rules and laws emerging out of communities. The work ethic, that is the paid work ethic, is central (Dwyer, 2000). The language of the third way includes ideas about balancing social justice and individual autonomy, balancing rights and responsibilities, pursuing social cohesion, and partnership between government and not-for-profit or community groups.

The notion of 'civil society' has been central to the rhetoric of the third way, with proponents indicating a renewal of democratic and institutional organisation and citizen participation through this politics (Chatterjee et al., 1999). Civil society, a term first used last century by de Tocqueville (Whaites, 2000), is constructed as a space between the market and the state, a space in which community values which are about long-term gain and well being can be expressed, and within which diversity and self-determination can flourish (Harris, 1999). Free market theory has been claimed to increase the functioning of civil society (Calhoun, 1994). Some proponents suggest that governments need to resource and facilitate the functioning of civil society (Harris, 1999). Community based, or not-for profit organisations, tend to be presented as key players in civil society, as is discussed further below.

At the same time as the third way is constructed as a pragmatic economic approach, it is also constructed as having a social face, including a concern to reduce poverty. During the late 1990s in Aotearoa New Zealand, public concern about the levels of poverty, the increasing gap between the rich and the poor, and the reduction in public services such as housing support, health and education, had become more obvious. Concerted opposition to globalisation came from a small number of activists in community organisations, unions, universities and Maori nationalist groups (Kelsey, 2002). Significant social policy changes occurred in response to repeated calls for affordable housing, health care and education. Examples include the reduction of state housing rents from market rents to income-related rents and increases in government superannuation, both of which provided some alleviation of poverty (Waldegrave, 2002).

Despite the policy shifts described above, there continues to be concern about the ongoing philosophical commitments of the government and various interest groups and individuals to neoliberal reform. While it appeared in 1999 that the neoliberal reforms of the past decade and a half might be reversed, the fundamentals of privatisation, liberalisation, deregulation and globalisation have not been altered. Furthermore any hint of change in these apparent fundamentals, brings accusations of socialism (Kelsey, 2002). Some have argued that a more deeply embedded form of neoliberalism has emerged, that the third way is short-term political management, but not long term transformation (Callinicos, 2001; Kelsey, 2002).

3. Maori and social and economic policy

Maori, as a group of separate tribal groupings or iwi, are the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand. Through the late 1700s and 1800s, successive waves of immigrants from Great Britain and a number of other countries, sought to settle in this country also. Many people in this country contend that 200 years of Western colonisation of this land have eroded the well being of many Maori and their communities.

Much of the ongoing debate about the position of Maori and cultural relations in this country have used the Treaty of Waitangi as the basis for claims and counter claims. In 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi and Te Tiriti o Waitangi[2] were signed by a number of Maori chiefs and representatives of the British Crown. While in the first clause the Treaty allocated a formal governance role to the British Crown, in part to help discipline the negative effects of incoming waves of European settlers, the second and third clauses and codicil together guaranteed Maori both the right to determine their own future and cultural direction, and the rights of

[2] The Maori and English versions differ in ways which have emerged as significant in Pakeha and Maori understandings of the promises which were made. For example, only 39 chiefs signed the English version, whereas almost 500 signed the Maori version (Orange, 1987). I refer from here on, in this chapter, to the Maori version, since that is the version which many Maori use to give voice to their concerns.

British citizens. The Treaties guaranteed protection of Maori ways of life, self-determination, and tino rangitiratanga[3] for Maori. Fleras and Spoonley (1999) argue that because of the status of Maori as indigenous people and the commitments made in Te Tiriti, Maori have collective entitlements and rights to autonomy and control of their own social and political systems, to their own identities, to exist as a distinct people with their own language and culture, and to resources, including land and other customary resources.[4] Similarly, Durie (1989) argues that Te Tiriti applies to the protection of the well being of Maori and thus is central to social policy.

There are many debates about the promises made and broken since Te Tiriti was signed, including debates about differences between the Maori and English versions, and accounts of what it is that was being agreed to. Nevertheless Te Tiriti has been used as a basis for a prolonged claim for bicultural relationships between Maori as tangata whenua, or people of this land, and Pakeha, the New Zealand born people of primarily British descent (Culpitt, 1994a; Spoonley, 1988). In particular, Maori have used Te Tiriti to assert a key role for government in honouring the promises made (Orange, 1987).

James Ritchie (1992) asserts that there are two predominant cultures in this country, not one. Pakeha culture is "dominant by power, history and majority. Maori culture is dominant by a longer history, by legacy and by its strength of survival and passionate commitment of its people" (Ritchie, 1992, p.7). In 1988, the Royal Commission on Social Policy recognised two distinct cultural traditions: Western liberalism and the indigenous Maori culture.

Western liberalism is characterised by key values of democracy, equality and personal liberty, which are expressed as equal rights of individuals and equality

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[3] The promise of tino rangatiratanga in Te Tiriti o Waitangi is argued by some to include a promise of chieftainshp at least equal to that of the state, and the promise of a separate and self-determined jurisdiction based on tikanga Maori, or Maori customary laws and practices. Ranginui Walker (Walker, 1996) suggests that tino rangitiratanga refers to the absolute chieftainship of the chiefs over their lands, homes and treasured possessions.

[4] Other customary resources include, for example, the right to control of fishing areas.

of individuals (Cheyne et al., 2000). These values have permeated liberal Pakeha concepts of justice and well being which tend to focus on outcomes for individuals. Maori concepts of well being, in contrast, tend to refer to cultural values associated with the needs and rights of the whanau, hapu and iwi[5]. In contrast to Western liberalism, Maori value collectivity and communalism. At the time of the signing of Te Tiriti, Maori society was organised collectively, and individual identity and rights existed through membership of a group defined by a common ancestry (Ballara, 1998). Rights were not egalitarian or communal but were complexly related to birth and place, in a system completely different to liberal Western concepts of rights.

Many Maori and some Pakeha have argued over many years that Pakeha-led governments have consistently pursued policies which have attempted to destroy the collectivist systems and values of Maori, and take ownership and control of customary resources. During British settlement in Aotearoa New Zealand new forms of individual land ownership and rights transferred from the English legal system eroded traditional collectivist systems such as rights to common land. Land was not viewed as a commodity by Maori, but rather it was perceived as a "source of identity, belonging and continuity to be shared between the dead, the living and the unborn" (Ministry of Justice & Ministry of Social Policy, 2000, p.2). Colonisation included both the valuing of individuals as autonomous and self-defining agents and the valuing of land and resources under an individualist capitalist system of ownership. This new system is argued to have been used to erode Maori collectivist interests (Cheyne et al., 2000).

Western liberal individualism was and is central to the legal and political system transferred from Britain by the settlers to this country. Some argue that this individualism is "but a guise for the group interests of property-owning, male

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[5] These terms denote complex individual, family and social arrangements, much of which is lost in translation. English definitions most commonly suggest whanau refers to an extended family, hapu to a collection of whanau descended from a common ancestor, and iwi to a confederation of hapu. However, whanau, for example, is more specifically defined as a cluster of families and individuals spanning three or four generations, descended from a fairly recent ancestor and living together in a group of houses (Ministry of Justice, 2001).

Pakeha" (Cheyne et al., 2000). Individualism is clearly counter to other collectively based notions of justice and well being, including those of Maori and some feminists. Cheyne, O'Brien and Belgrave (2000) point out that groups seeking collectivist goals have had no choice but to seek reforms compatible with individualist aims and systems, and that while some reforms have been significant, there has been little or no sharing of economic or political power, or even recognition of the difference of collectivist goals.

Since the signing of Te Tiriti, and particularly over the last 40 years, Maori have attempted to reclaim resources for economic and cultural self-determination, and gained in voice politically. Kelsey (1990) suggests that the primary resistance to neoliberal economic reform during the 1980s came from Maori activism which had become particularly strong through the 1970s. During the 1980s, biculturalism became a significant part of social policy and Te Tiriti has provided a significant benchmark for assessing social policy in this country (Cheyne, 2000).

Fleras and Spoonley (1999) argue that social policy commitments to biculturalism during the 1980s were cause for optimism, particularly in the space they provided for people of good will to debate issues of justice and equity. However, they also suggest that there was cause for concern in the development of economic and social policy. The economic restructuring of the 1980s and 1990s had been disastrous for Maori, many of whom faced intergenerational poverty and disadvantage. The already significant gap between Maori and non-Maori in social indicators such as health, education and income had widened (Durie, 1989). Maori families were two and a half times more likely to live in poverty than Pakeha families (Kelsey, 1999). Such consequences were heaped on top of a century and a half of marginalisation and dispossession (Kelsey, 1990). Cheyne, O'Brien and Belgrave suggest that the discourse of humanitarianism of the 1840s has now become the discourse of biculturalism, partnership, and pluralism with its valuing of diversity, and postmodernism: "the rhetoric draws Maori into the discourse, but in practice little else has changed" (2000, p.148).

Kelsey (1990) suggests that the poverty, homelessness and unemployment faced by many Maori arose out of a fundamental contradiction between the interests of colonial capitalism and the rights of tangata whenua to their own political and economic sovereignty. She also suggests that the neoliberal reforms of economic and social policy are the current face of ongoing colonisation of Maori: "the market model could never accommodate the cultural and spiritual relationships in Maori society between the human and natural worlds" (1999, p.20). The ethos of whanaungatanga[6] and the obligations of Maori as kaitiaki or guardians of the natural world, were in complete contradiction to the ideal of the rational pursuit of individual self-interest and the exploitation of natural resources for profit (Kelsey, 1999). Spoonley (1988) describes this as a fundamental clash between competitive individualism, or capitalism, and communalism.

Even where there was space for discussion of social inclusion, it was not often understood that for Maori, social inclusion is based on whakapapa[7] rather than access to individually assigned resources (Kelsey, 2002). For Maori, well being is determined not through reference to individual equality, but through reference to cultural values associated with the needs and rights of whanau, hapu and iwi. Neoliberal approaches emphasise choice and consumer responsiveness for individual consumers, rather than group concerns and rights as advocated in Tiriti-led social policy (Cheyne et al., 2000). Durie (1989) argues that rights, including the rights of children, need to be applied both to individuals and to groups, and that the neglect of collectively based rights has been particularly costly for Maori.

Two threads of post-colonial theorising in this country have been the articulation of kaupapa Maori theory (Maori social policy) and mana wahine theory (Maori feminist theory) (Cheyne et al., 2000). Both draw attention to the particular rights and claims of Maori as the indigenous people of our country, and to the way in which social policy reflects and enacts the privilege of Pakeha as the

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[6] Whanaungatanga is a system of collective obligations based on common ancestry.

[7] Whakapapa is a description of the phenomenological world in the form of a genealogical recital, which invokes notions of orderliness, sequence, evolution and progress (Walker, 1996).

dominant group. One portion of this critique has been an examination of the focus on individual equality and individual well being.

C. Theoretical perspectives on neoliberalism

In Chapter 2, I wrote briefly about Foucault's critique of dominant discourses of liberalism as the current rationality of government, including emphases on individual liberty and rights, and a limited economic form of reasoning. Much of the recent work taking Foucault's analysis further has focussed on the apparatuses by which neoliberal governmentality occurs, including through economic and social policy, practices of management and psychology, and other disciplinary forms of social control.

1. Economic and social principles

Theorists working in a number of fields have articulated the broader basis of neoliberalism, as it emerged in economic and social policy. Pratt (1997), for example, suggests that neoliberalism rests on three assumptions: methodological individualism, rationality and the supremacy of the free market. Methodological individualism assumes that society can only be broken down to the actions of individuals who go about their lives, making free choices about how they live and thus determining their own situations. Individuals are thus believed to act in a rational manner for the pursuit of self-interest. Markets are assumed to be fair and equitable institutions which provide for the exchange of goods and services between rational individuals pursuing their own interests (Pratt, 1997).

Aotearoa New Zealand economist, Tim Hazledine (1998), draws on a number of other writers to describe neoliberal economics as being constructed out of the modernist notion of the individual who is alone in the universe, self-seeking and self-obsessive, rational and opportunistic, and an economic agent only interested in optimising individual wealth. This focus on individuals and short-term self-centred behaviour as rational microeconomic efficiency is particularly strong in

Anglo-American cultures and is used to imply that market theory is morally better than other theories or narratives of social and economic policy.

There is also a growing literature on the politics of consumption. Discourses of consumerism assume that people formulate their goals in life partly through acquiring goods they do not need to subsist, and assume their identity from what they are able to buy or consume (Stearns, 2001). In contrast, Hazledine (1998) argues for developing an alternative economics which is not based on consumption nor the amassing of wealth, but is based instead on concepts of decency, morality, altruism and empathy. Such an economics would recognise the importance of process as well as outcomes and its own cultural and social bases.

From a neoliberal perspective, social welfare is constructed as a public burden (Humphries, 1996) and liberty is the absence of externally imposed controls. To be free is to be free to consume. People improve their positions by making the right choices in their lives. The discourse of neoliberal economic rationalism has been closely allied to a discourse of individual choice and responsibility, in which people, now consumers, customers, clients or users, would be empowered by the choices available to them to make more competitive choices about the services they receive from leaner, competitive organisations. This would apparently remove the financial burden for welfare from the state, and make individuals responsible for making the 'right' choices (Deakin, 2001b; Dean, 1999). Within this discourse, social justice would be delivered by the marketplace, and the welfare state could only be a 'safety net', not a means for re-allocation of resources (McClure, 1998). People had civil rights, but not a right to welfare resources, such as education and health care. The notion of ensuring all people could participate in their communities disappeared from public policy documents in the early 1990s, in favour of statements about promoting self-sufficiency and individual responsibility (Higgins, 1997).

A number of theorists have provided strong critiques of the individualising tendencies of neoliberalism. Charles Taylor (1998), for example, calls this 'atomism' and suggests that liberal freedom is constructed as the freedom to

choose one's life plans without constraint, and to have private property as the essence of independence. Bauman (2001a; 2001b) also describes the Western habit of analysis at the level of the individual and the consequential image of the disengaged self as metaphysically independent of society, manifest in many modern practices, including psychology, psychotherapy, economics, medicine, and human resource management (Wertsch, 2001/1990). Many of the projects of 'self-development' are argued to be the modern form of governmentality, or the means of disciplining human conduct (Dean, 1999).

2. Managerialism and the self

Managerialism as an apparatus of neoliberal reform is significant here because the social and economic reforms in Aotearoa New Zealand relied on the techniques of strategic management being shifted from the private sector to the public sector (Martin, 1991). Strategic management assumes the right to manage and control according to apparently rational and objective principles which assume an apparent neutrality and inevitability (Knights & Morgan, 1991). Management is conceived as a generic practice perfected by the private sector (Kaboolian, 1998). Knights (1992) uses a Foucauldian analysis to articulate the role of management knowledge as apparent science, rationality and truth. Managerialism also occurs through viewing the identity, health and well being of people as both a psychological principle and at the same time a managerial principle of efficiency. The apparent science of psychiatry was moved through psychology and human resource management to organisations as a means of 'managing effectively'. Economics, management and psychology became the practices of governmentality via the organisation (Miller & Rose, 2001/1988) and via social policy.

The new public management discourse in this country relied on the notion that public and private organisations can and should be managed in similar ways, with the practices of private sector management to be taken up within the public sector (Boston, Martin, Pallot, & Walsh, 1996). 'Managing strategically' involved a shift away from social policy to an emphasis on corporate image and mission statements, short-term highly specified contracts, outcomes, outputs,

reporting, monitoring and accountability. Senior staff became managers, required to have generic management skills, often with performance-based pay systems. Cutting costs became the means for improving efficiency (Boston et al., 1996).

Yeatman (1990; 1991) argues that though the rhetoric of neoliberal economic reform hinged on an apparent need to 'roll back the state' or minimise the power of the state in a number of Anglo-American democracies, it is the direction of the state which changed, rather than the extent of the state. Social policy became less about public good, and more about economic good. Bureaucratic institutional power became managerial contractual power. The means for achieving economic good was to be through managing efficiently and effectively, using the techniques of intensive reporting on outputs and human resource management (Boston et al., 1996). Paradoxically economic good was to be achieved by managing the economy less and external social services more.

The techniques and knowledge systems of strategic management and psychology were then shifted, particularly via the contracting system, from the public sector to the not-for-profit sector, particularly those organisations offering social services. This shift is discussed further in Chapter 6 in relation to not-for-profit social services.

3. Social control

An analysis has also begun to emerge of the relatedness of political economy as neoliberalism and the techniques of social control in Western countries. Gordon (2000) suggests that Foucault's work on government in the late 1970s provided a foundation for this, by weaving together liberal economy and the everyday practices of social control.

Recently, Garland (2001) moved this critique forward in his careful analysis of social control through the discourse of crime. He argues that the emphases and outcomes of neoliberalism and neoconservative politics in Western countries have been more exclusionary, more socially controlling, and more in line with

private freedoms of the market, rather than being solidaristic, providing socially, and constructing public freedom through universal citizenship (Garland, 2001).

Garland (2001) suggests that a powerful narrative has emerged of moral decline in response to the social and political changes and freedoms of previous decades. Moral decline is seen to be demonstrated by symptoms such as increasing crime rates, teenage pregnancies, drug abuse, welfare dependency, single-parent families and so on. Novak (1997) comments on the growing and concerted move in Britain at least, to characterise sections of the poor as an 'underclass'. People in this 'underclass' are then blamed for being poor, because of making poor lifestyle choices, and they are constructed as a threat to social well being. He calls this the "demonization of the 'underclass' as a class apart from others" (p.222), and notes its particular effects on single mothers, as is discussed further below.

The response to this apparent moral decline has been to impose all kinds of controls and exclusions, directed particularly at those groups most affected by economic and social change, and including the new poor 'underclass' (Crompton, 2000):

> Convinced of the need to re-impose order, but unwilling to restrict consumer choice or to give up personal freedoms; determined to enhance their own security, but unwilling to pay more taxes or finance the security of others; appalled by unregulated egoism and anti-social attitudes but committed to a market system which reproduces that very culture, the anxious middle-classes today seek resolution for their ambivalence in zealously controlling the poor and excluding the marginal. Above all, they impose controls upon 'dangerous' offenders and 'undeserving' claimants whose conduct leaves some to suppose that they are incapable of discharging the responsibilities of the late modern freedom. The most vehement punishments are reserved for those guilty of child abuse, illegal drug use, or sexual violence - precisely the areas in which mainstream social and cultural norms have undergone the greatest change and where middle-class ambivalence and guilt are at their most intense. (Garland, 2001, pp.195-196)

Attention to the supposed 'underclass' is used to evoke a formless but frightening threat to family, law and order, and the labour market, and has been used to justify cuts in welfare spending (Novak, 1997). Garland (2001) suggests that the problems that accompany increased control have highlighted the limits of nation states, and that governments must devolve power and share social control with local organisations and communities.

Similarly in Aotearoa New Zealand, Pratt suggests that "the political ethos of the 1990s - 'look after your self because the state can now only provide minimum levels of assistance' - has a hand in raising people's anxieties about security and well-being" (1999, p.10). This ethos, combined with other changing attitudes to what counts as crime (including domestic violence), has led to increasing rates of imprisonment along with the construction of certain groups of people as criminally dangerous, and a punitive attitude towards those people.

4. Resisting neoliberalism

In a number of fields, theorists and activists have developed ways to resist neoliberal discourses. Pertinent here is work which deconstructs the neoliberal notion of 'self' and the discourse of communitarianism.

Feminists working from a range of perspectives have challenged the ethnocentric and liberal model of the autonomous consumer-oriented subject by focussing on the processes of subjectivity (Kilby & Lury, 2000). In turn, theorists and practitioners have used work on subjectivity to deconstruct the psychological notion of the rational, unitary self which is able to be discovered through effective psychiatric, psychological or therapeutic practice and knowledge (Parker, 1999). Gergen (1994) argues for a discourse of the self which is a relational view of self, involving narratives of the self made intelligible within ongoing relationships. Identity, he argues, emerges through an array of complex and moving relationships. Identities are co-produced in relation to each other (Madigan, 1999).

Others stress the primacy of community and the social embeddedness of people (Dwyer, 2000). The notion of 'communitarianism' has emerged as part of the resistance to the liberal individual (Taylor, 1998). Barber (1984), for example, argues for community as invoking persons as socially constituted and seeking mutuality in relationships, rather than individuals motivated by consumer desire. Bauman (2001a) suggests that the building of community happens by weaving people together through sharing and mutual care. Communitarianism is posited as a 'politics of the common good" (Dwyer, 2000, p.34), rather than a politics of individual rights. Communally defined obligations and practices are argued to provide both understanding and construction of public good, and individual autonomy.

Torfing (1999) suggests that there is a clash between the moral and ontological individualism of liberalism, and the communitarianism implicit in democratic thought. He suggests that liberal discourse be "radicalised through an immanent critique of its limitations" (1999, p.27), and much of the communitarian writing does focus on critiquing neoliberal or welfare capitalist society, while appealing to the notion of an ideal of community (Young, 1990). Communitarian critics of liberalism suggest that oppression emerges from the alienation of individuals from public and political debate (Dwyer, 2000).

Feminist philosopher Iris Marion Young (1990) suggests, however, that we see beyond the dualism of neoliberalism and communitarianism to conceive other possibilities for social relations. She expresses concern that the ideal of community denies and represses social difference by wanting to fuse individuals and groups into one another. Others have also critiqued communitarianism as uncritical and nostalgic, noting the possibility of paternalistic views of community prevailing (Dwyer, 2000). Many writers have commented on the imprecision and widely varying implications in the ways the term 'community' is used (Amit, 2002). For example, the notion of community is a contested site within the discourses of the third way and civil society, as discussed above.

Young's (1990) work on justice constituted through the politics of difference provides one way to move beyond the dialectic of liberal individualism and communitarianism, and is explored further in the next section.

5. Social justice perspectives

The above discussions of social policy and neoliberal discourses have touched regularly on issues of justice, including concepts such as freedom, rights, equality and well being. There has been a growing discourse of social justice in Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas over recent decades, within which there are a number of threads. Although the concept of social justice is frequently used, it is rarely defined and often used in both competing and overlapping ways. Within the social and economic policy literature, social justice tends to be constructed in three main ways: as distributive, retributive or recognitive (Humpage & Fleras, 2001).

Those who advocate for distributive justice tend to focus on the distribution of resources, particularly material resources. Rawls' work on justice attempts to rationalise universal equality and individual liberty as key tenets of distributive justice (Solomon & Murphy, 1990). Fairness in allocation is concentrated on, with everyone being treated the same, unless an unequal allocation is necessary because of historical disadvantage. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the welfare state was seen as a means of re-distributing wealth so that well being was ensured for all, while more recently churches have led calls for recognition of the growing gap between the rich and the poor, and the need for a means of re-distribution (Peace, 2001).

Retributive justice is grounded in the principle of fairness in the competition for scarce resources. Equal opportunity ensures everybody may compete, and those who compete the best deserve their extra share of resources. Within this framework, those previously not accorded equal opportunity to compete may be compensated (Humpage & Fleras, 2001). Nozick and other libertarians use the principle of equal right to compete to justify the right to accumulate private property (Solomon & Murphy, 1990).

Neither distributive, nor retributive models of justice challenge the systems which create injustice, but tend to construct the current system of allocation of resources as natural, inevitable and universal. Both models are criticised for their lack of adequate attention to context, difference, and social processes, including the constitutive power of institutions and relationships (Humpage & Fleras, 2001). They are critiqued for their ontological assumption that individuals exist prior to communities or society (Sandel, 1990/1982; Solomon & Murphy, 1990) and for their assumption that a single, universal theory of justice is possible (Young, 1990).

In contrast, the politics of identity have led to calls for recognitive justice, an expanded and fundamentally different sense of justice, which recognises the varying placement and legitimacy of diverse groups of people identified in certain ways. Such calls include justice for individuals and groups, made most frequently in terms of race, gender, class, sexuality and disability. Recognitive justice is usually described as relating to self-determination and inclusiveness (Humpage & Fleras, 2001), and it occurs through transformation of social structures and processes. In Aotearoa New Zealand, claims for rights and transformation based on Te Tiriti, can be understood as a politics of recognition (Peace, 2001).

Recognitive justice involves recognising the different social processes, institutions and cultural politics which create disadvantage, while securing and maintaining the power and privilege of dominant groups (Young, 1990). Young, argues that "a conception of justice should begin with the concepts of domination and oppression" (1990, p.1), and that acknowledging and attending to difference and to the differences in privilege and oppression between groups in order to undermine oppression is social justice work. Young's (1990) critique of individualist and communitarian conceptions of justice is that both deny and exclude those people or groups experienced as different.

Loizou (1997), writing about social justice and social policy, advocates that the question we need to ask ourselves is always, 'what is the role of the concept of justice?' This works well with Young's call for a reflective justice, which is

deliberately situated in political discussion of justice in particular sites, and aims at clarifying, describing and explaining social relations, rather than developing a universal theory.

In that spirit of reflective examination of the use of 'social justice', a number of writers have articulated and critiqued neoliberal assumptions about justice. Neoliberal perspectives tend to

> see social justice as best served by a conception of liberty which treats issues of relative wealth or poverty - more specifically economic constraints on one's ability to realize one's aims - as factors which belong to nature rather than to human choice; and the state then has the obligation to ensure liberty as thus conceived. (Loizou, 1997, p.170)

In contrast, Bauman (2001a) argues for justice which is based on both the universality of humanity and the accommodation of plurality. Other advocates of communitarianism suggest that justice must emanate from an individual's social location and traditions (Dwyer, 2000). Dwyer (2000) expresses concern that the politics of a common good could lead to intolerant and repressive regimes. He argues for reflection and critical scrutiny to continually work within a communitarian framework.

Others have argued that the individualising tendancy of neoliberalism has led to the assumption that justice must be about the unassailable rights of individuals (Loizou, 1997). Ahmed and others (2000) also advocate that we keep asking ourselves about the ways in which the idea of 'rights' is being used. Feminist scholars have long argued that the concept of human rights derives from the European liberal tradition which privileges the masculine, autonomous individual (Lake, Holmes, & Grimshaw, 2001). Foucault (in Gordon, 2000) proposes an alternative to the liberal notion of the universality of individual human rights. He puts forward the notion of relational rights. Gordon (2000) explains that Foucault's proposal arose out of concern within the gay community, but with a wider social presence. Rights are often argued for individuals or groups, but we have few ways of extending the notion of rights to recognise and arise out of relationships. Perhaps with similar intent, Bauman (2001a) argues for a

citizenship based not on the private individual but in the public space between people.

Concepts of social justice have been used in a number of discourses, including neoliberal social policy which has also included a key role for not-for-profit community organisations in providing for just outcomes. The role of such organisations and the growing discourse around them is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Not-for-profit organisations and social services

A. Introduction

Neoliberal assumptions, policies and practices intersect in complex ways with both not-for-profit and social service organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand. In this chapter, I continue reviewing the context within which Waikato Anglican Social Services was located, by focusing on the growing literature regarding the third/community/voluntary/not-for-profit sector, including evocations of the sector as a site for civil society and social transformation, and critiques of the import of managerialism into the sector. Since Waikato Anglican Social Services was establishing a new service for women and their children, I also provide an overview of issues in the social services sector, particularly in relation to services for women and children, and the various roles of church-based community organisations.

B. The not-for-profit sector

There has been a growing discourse of the not-for-profit sector, which interacts with various neoliberal and social justice discourses. The characteristics of not-for-profit organisations constructed within the discourse are described here because the Agency is located within it as a not-for-profit organisation, and part of this inquiry has been to reflect on that location and the ways in which the relationships between sectors in Aotearoa New Zealand both constrain and construct the possibilities for the social justice work of such organisations. Its relationship with government agencies, for example, is crucial in its practice.

There are a number of principles generally held to characterise organisations within the discourse of the not-for-profit sector, although many people acknowledge first the huge diversity of groups and the difficulty of generalising (Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party, 2001). Nevertheless the concept of a 'sector' has come to have currency. Not-for-profit organisations tend to be characterised as having some level of voluntarism or altruism, a commitment to values which are usually mutually and passionately held, and a focus on doing work which comes out of the values, rather than making a profit (Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party, 2001). Many hold values which include cooperation, empowerment through community development, trust, stewardship, hope and goodwill, and a focus on local solutions. Not-for-profit organisations are often spoken of as uniquely enabling participation and citizenship, as well as service (Nowland-Foreman, 1997).

The discourse of the not-for-profit sector has shifted significantly over the last three decades. It has been legitimised through both the depiction of the sector as unique and distinguishable from the private, state and domestic sectors, and able to make a particular contribution to democracy and civil society, and through the growth of academic perspectives on the sector (see, for example, the history of academic perspectives in Harris, Rochester, & Halfpenny, 2001). The not-for-profit sector has also been called the voluntary sector, the community sector, the non-governmental sector, and the third sector, with a slightly different emphasis demonstrated in each title.

1. Civil society

Not-for-profit organisations are constructed as having a key role to play in 'civil society' as described in Chapter 5. The notion of civil society has become a site of contest for social and economic policy, being claimed by both neoliberal thinkers and some of those wishing to resist neoliberalism.

Calls for a return to the values of 'civil society' by writers such as Green (1998) have included a moral imperative close to the imperatives of neoliberalism and the third way. Civil society is constructed as consisting of those free associations

of family, neighbourhood, and organisations which are neither government nor private sector, to be "community without politics" (Green, 1998, p.9). Such calls include the proposed withdrawal of government from welfare provision, which is presented as strengthening people and society by avoiding dependency and victimism. Not-for-profit social services are constructed as having a key role in supporting people in times of need. Furthermore, Green (1998) suggests that none of their funding should come from government so as to resist statist intervention in welfare thus weakening the social ties and mutual obligations of civil society.

A key object of the civil society discourse is voluntary action. Osborne (1996d) suggests that not-for-profit organisations encapsulate three principles of voluntary action. The first, voluntarism, denotes that voluntary action is construed as a building block for society. This principle has grown out of religious inspiration that valued voluntarism within Christianity (Osborne, 1996a). The second, volunteerism, highlights that not-for-profit organisations often include individuals who freely choose to participate and contribute without pay. The third, voluntary association, highlights the independent organising and governance, and self-regulating practices of such organisations. Such independence is often espoused as an essential ingredient in democracy, because it provides a place for different voices, adds diversity of service, and keeps a check on government (Osborne, 1996d).

A number of people, writing from a range of perspectives, have challenged the idea that a civil society ensures equity, well being and democracy. Wickliffe (2000), for example, suggests that current definitions of civil society, as distinct from the state and the market, do not accommodate kinship and collectively structured societies, as are integral to many indigenous societies. She asserts that current definitions also imply that the qualities of free expression of ideas and religion and freedom of association are only attainable in Western liberal democracies. She argues for a broader sense of civil society which recognises the rights of indigenous peoples, and includes values such as pluralism, cohesiveness, and the rights of people of all identities in a broader sense of democracy than Western liberal democracy (Wickliffe, 2000).

Wilson (1997) suggests that there is an implicit agenda behind the rhetoric of civil society and the focus on social responsibility of individuals as citizens in the evocation of voluntarism. The rhetoric around rights and responsibilities, which traditionally focussed on the state, has become increasingly focussed on 'civil society'. Tennant (2001) suggests that the re-valuing of voluntarism and altruism is a move away from the critique of patronising, class-ridden charity, carried out by wealthy ladies, and signifying considerable social control.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, there have been challenges to the inclusion of Maori and iwi organisations within the discourses of the third sector and civil society. The Western notion of voluntaryism, for example, does not fit within, and should not be imposed upon Maori cultural understandings of obligation and reciprocity (Robinson & Williams, 2001; Te Momo, 2001). Maori understandings of community work should not be included as part of a sector defined by others (Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party, 2001).

Concomitant with calls for not-for-profit organisations to contribute to these notions of civil society is an increased surge of interest in many parts of the world in the diverse array of organisations which operate outside of the state or the market, including a focus on these organisations as providing an alternative to neoliberal economic and social reform (Salamon, Anheier, & Associates, 1999).

2. Relationship with government

Much of the debate about civil society and the roles of the not-for-profit sector has focussed on the relationships between government and civil society, or government and not-for-profit organisations. The capacity of and possibilities for community organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand to contribute to civil society have been challenged by the Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party set up to consider the relationship between government and iwi/Maori, community and voluntary organisations, which met and consulted with many community groups during 2000. In its Report, the Working Party (2001) noted the dependence of many community organisations on government funding, and

their sense of having been excluded from policy making while at the same time being subjected to increased operational scrutiny through the government contracting system. Strong calls were made for a more participatory democracy.

The Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party included Maori participants and the views of many Maori from many iwi and organisations were sought. The view that Maori have their own relationships with government to attend to which should be separate to discussions about the relationship between government and the community sector was widespread (Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party, 2001).

The Report of the Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party (2001) articulated a strong view within the community sector that the social and economic reforms of the 1980s and 1990s had led to a relationship of mistrust and tension between government and the community sector. Government had withdrawn from providing many services, but had left the community sector under-resourced to provide those services. The Report also noted the irony of community based social services increasingly being required to accept market-based models to do work which had become increasingly necessary because of the failure of those very models.

Such criticisms, among others, led members of the Working Party to make it clear to government officials that there would need to be considerable rebuilding of the relationship before any kind of formal partnership could be recognised. The Prime Minister, Helen Clark, and the Minister responsible for the community and voluntary sector, Steve Maharey, issued a formal Statement of Intent in 2001[8], setting out government's commitment to strong and respectful relationships between government and community, voluntary and iwi/Maori organisations. The Working Party's recommendations also led to further proposals for strengthening organisations within the community/voluntary sector, set out in *He waka kotuia* (Community-Government Relationship Steering

[8] Statement of Government Intentions for an Improved Community - Government Relationship

Group, 2002), work on accountability and resourcing issues, and work on participatory processes.

Over the last two to three years, there has also been increasing talk of partnerships between community based organisations and government organisations. An example of such a partnership is presented as having occurred in the development of *Te Rito* (Family Violence Focus Group, 2002), the strategy for preventing, reducing and addressing family violence. The strategy is an agreed 'cross-sector' one involving both government agencies and a range of non-governmental agencies, and the process of development enabled the establishment of working relationships across sectors (Maynard & Wood, 2002).

3. Managerialism in the not-for-profit sector

Deakin (2001) notes that, particularly in Aotearoa New Zealand, the government's work through the public sector had become essentially business-like, with market values and procedures pre-eminent. Contracting to the not-for-profit sector a huge range of services previously carried out through government agencies was one way of exporting those market and business discourses into social policy in a way which has seemed inevitable and unquestionable. The discourse of managerialism was moved from the private sector to the public sector to the not-for-profit sector.

Within the not-for-profit sector, managerialism has been manifest in several ways. Senior staff have been required to be managers, to appraise performance, to motivate, to be visionary in leading mission and corporate values (words borrowed, interestingly, from religious discourses), to be accountable, to use technology for competition, and so on. Management became a specific role separate to that of the health or social work professional roles (Schofield, 2001). Internal processes and structures of not-for-profit organisations changed to fit the managerialist and bureaucratic requirements of government funders, who through intense monitoring required standardised documentation, auditing, evaluation and accountability (Froelich, 1999).

Managerialism has been applied vigorously to reconstitute the not-for-profit sector, particularly as the sector has become responsible for more public services, previously organised as part of the state. There is a plethora of books, handbooks and guides advising people in the not-for-profit sector to take a management perspective and how to do it according to the scientific and rational perspectives of strategic management. Comments such as the following abound:

> Strategic management is an orientation to management which is vital for all managers, including those of VNPOs [voluntary non profit organisations], to possess and practice....there is a core insight in the practice of strategic management that makes it applicable to all organisations and indeed, arguably, makes it more useful to mission-driven voluntary organisations which have no ready method, such as profitability, for assessing their performance. (Lyons, 1996, pp.88-89)

Thus a certain kind of accountability through performance assessment is also invoked, and demonstrated in titles such as "the rational model approach to performance management" (Osborne, 1996b).

Stone and Bryson (2000) suggest there are three reasons not-for-profit organisations need to manage strategically: growth of the sector has increased public visibility and scrutiny, including by funders; growth in competition within the sector and hence the need to prove they are good investments; and the blurring of boundaries between public, private and not-for-profit organisations. They do suggest that strategic management theory is not necessarily a perfect tool for not-for-profit organisations, since it is apparently apolitical in contrast to the political nature of many not-for-profit organisations, it does not address the plural and often ambiguous goals of not-for-profit organisations and the often passionately held goals of community empowerment, and it does not address issues of faith and hope in not-for-profit organisations. However, Stone and Bryson remain convinced and aim to convince their readers that strategic planning is an essential need (as opposed to constructed) for not-for-profit organisations.

People in not-for-profit organisations have been exhorted particularly to take up the principles and processes of strategic planning and associated measurement of

goal attainment. New ways of assessing the effectiveness of an organisation have been part of the rhetoric:

> The most obvious (and frequent) approach to defining and evaluating organisational effectiveness is to ask; to what extent does an organisation reach its goals? Of course this question assumes that organisations have goals, that the goals can be discovered, that the goals are at least somewhat stable; that abstract goals can be converted into specific objective measures; and that data relevant to those measures can be collected in a timely and appropriate manner. Much of academic organisational theory has observed that these are problematic assumptions.... (Herman & Renz, 1999, p.108)

Assuming management and business practices has also been argued to be a way to impress a range of funders, both state and philanthropic (Alexander, 2000) indicating the preferences of many funders.

The growing literature on guiding not-for-profit organisations in management technology assumes that a transfer of the technology will enable those organisations to 'catch up' to the private and public sectors: "in the midst of this outpouring of advice, there is reason to suspect that nonprofit organisations might not be well served by a push for increasingly greater operational efficiency" (Frumkin & Andre-Clark, 2000, p.141). In some of the literature, the growth of the literature itself is used as a reason to assume that the advice must be beneficial. Maquignaz (1996), for example, suggests that the growing literature on strategic planning for community organisations is evidence of the validity of the practice in improving their work. Suggesting that strategic management theory is apolitical is one way of rendering invisible the constructedness of the discourse and the exercise of power through its evocation.

Managerialist assumptions are also made by proponents of action research for management purposes. Gummesson (1991), for example, links action research with management by articulating the role of action researcher as a combination of management consultant and academic researcher, which combine best in an approach as a change agent. Throughout his discussion, the contribution of management (both as embodied in managers and as discourse) through for-profit

organisations remains unquestioned, asserted implicitly as beneficial. Action researchers are to be change agents, but the direction of the change is unquestioned. The use of action research in the pursuit of the goals of management for business is assumed to be a worthy pursuit. Indeed it is deemed so inherently beneficial that Gummesson asserts the value of the business case studies he describes, for both government and voluntary action sectors too.

4. The not-for-profit sector in Britain

I describe here changes in social and economic policy related to changes in the not-for-profit sector in Britain because Aotearoa New Zealand's legal and political system and Western notions of voluntarism were initially modelled on those of the British settlers (Tennant, 2001), and the policy direction has been similar in both countries. I draw on the British literature critiquing these changes because the critique appears to be particularly sustained, and can be useful in thinking through the changes occurring in our country.

Not-for-profit organisations have been called to contribute to civil society and social change because of their perceived independence of both government and business. However, Hudock (1999) suggests that the way in which not-for-profit organisations are funded affects their ability to contribute to the ideals of 'civil society', that is to reach those most disadvantaged, to encourage participation by those people, to focus on development and outcomes, to respond to needs flexibly, to work with and through local organisations, to be cost-effective, to find innovative solutions, to undertake people-centred research, and to learn from and apply field experience.

In Britain, political and economic changes in the 1980s had a profound impact on the roles and financial structures of the not-for-profit sector. Government moved from unitary public services provided by government to a plural system, often called a mixed economy of care, in which public services were planned by government and at best, partially funded by government but organised through both the for-profit and the not-for-profit sectors (Osborne, 1996a). Some not-for-profit organisations were propelled to mainstream service provision (Harris et al.,

2001). This moved some of those organisations further away from their non-bureaucratic structures, flexibility, and capacity for innovation, and made them heavily reliant on government funding, thereby challenging their independence from the state and creating different criteria, needs and measures of accountability (Osborne, 1996a). Some writers suggest that, at least in Britain, not-for-profit organisations now have a much closer relationship to both local and national government (Deakin, 2001b). Others have suggested there is an increasing interdependence of sectors (Osborne, 1996d).

The relationship between government and many not-for-profit organisations became one of contract embedded within a market discourse (Harris et al., 2001), where government contracted out services, which were provided by not-for-profit organisations (Kay, 1996). Not only did this change the legal relationship but it also established a complex, often problematic and ambiguous relationship with ethical issues around independence, political involvement, competition and/or cooperation, accountability, the ability to voice community concern and civil action (Scott & Russell, 2001; Taylor, 1996). Not surprisingly, the contract culture and market pluralism that developed was also consonant with the growth of managerialism in the statutory sector (Harris et al., 2001; James, 1994; Mooney, 1997; Scott & Russell, 2001).

Ambiguities and complexities have also been articulated in terms of fundraising by not-for-profit organisations. Many not-for-profit organisations are partially and inadequately funded by government, and therefore rely on other sources of income and donations, while being exhorted by management consultants and writers to develop a fundraising strategy, business plans, evaluation measures and so on. Such complexities then tend to be phrased in questions such as "what impact might your fund-raising strategy have upon your mission-critical activity, and vice-versa?" (Osborne, 1996c, p.49). Scott and Russell's (2001) research with 27 not-for-profit organisations in the 1990s demonstrated the financial uncertainty, funding inadequacies, opportunism, and mission drift which have been part of the experiences of these organisations. Further, an increase in voluntary hours by paid staff and changes in expectations of volunteers have also

been evident, with volunteers being sought for their technical skills, rather than social concerns.

In Britain, there have been attempts to encourage all people to take part in community and voluntary action, partly to fill the gap left by government withdrawal from aspects of welfare provision and partly to fulfil the rhetoric of increased citizen action. Yet many not-for-profit organisations find it increasingly difficult to maintain volunteer input. There are many reasons given for this, ranging from the increase in women in paid work, to the decrease in people involved in Christian philanthropy, to the increasing regulation of individual lives and of not-for-profit organisation and practice (Rochester, 2001; Smith, 2001). Within not-for-profit care providers, for example, managers and paid workers have increasing levels of risk compliance work to complete while volunteers often have to be checked, assessed, and closely supervised to be able to take part in a community organisation. Board members are increasingly sought for their professional and management skills, a trend which mitigates against the desired inclusion of users in governance and service development (Harris, 2001). This increasing bureaucracy is argued to threaten the apparent flexibility, informality and social inclusiveness of voluntary organisation (Rochester, 2001).

Deakin (2001a; 2001b) points out that the not-for-profit sector is not simply a spectator or recipient of the huge social and economic policy changes. His description of a new web of relationships for Britain's not-for-profit organisations, including changed relationships with local government, could equally apply in Aotearoa New Zealand. He also describes a number of state-led attempts to generate enthusiasm in the third sector through consultants, commissions of inquiry and guides for 'effective practice', and a number of national reviews by larger coordinating groups seeking to equip the third sector with the capacity to cope with the changed environment.

In Britain, the National Compact signed between government and the voluntary sector in 1998, and reviewed annually, is supposed to guide a new relationship in which the independence of the sector, and ability to advocate and campaign are

protected, and new ways of participating in policy making and determining funding are developed.

Taylor (2001) writes about the possibilities and risks for British not-for-profit organisations drawn into government policy making, or moving from the 'outside' to the 'inside' of policy-making under the new rhetoric of partnership. Some organisations choose to stay outside of such partnership because of the threat they perceive to their distinctive contribution. Many organisations have experienced partnership with government as being unevenly weighted toward government who provides the resources, sets the rules and decides who can play. Taylor (2001) suggests that there are benefits when organisations are strategic in their choice of partnerships, can spot cracks in the system, can generate opportunities for different ways of engaging and when there is an adequately resourced infrastructure for the voluntary sector.

C. Social services

Many not-for-profit organisations provide social services, and the notion of a social service sector has gained currency in recent years. A clear and unambiguous definition of what constitutes the social services sector is probably not possible. However, Cheyne, O'Brien and Belgrave suggest that "in its broadest sense the term is used to refer to those services and programmes which are designed to meet individual, interpersonal, group, and family needs for care, support, treatment, advocacy, rehabilitation, and/or protection" (2000, p.190). Social services fall across the range of health, welfare, justice and education sectors.

Social services can be provided by people and organisations operating within the state, the private sector, the not-for-profit sector, religious organisations, iwi, hapu and whanau, and families. People involved may be paid or volunteer, trained or untrained, professionally qualified or not, and services are provided in

homes, day and residential centres, marae[9], communities, workplaces and schools. Funding for social services can come from charitable sources, government and other contracts, taxation, sponsorship, user charges and fees. There is thus a complex range of possibilities for social service organisations. Historical studies now tend to reveal a constantly shifting balance between public and private, or state and community based social service provision (Tennant, 2001).

1. The shift away from government provided social services

The neoliberal approach to social and economic policy in Aotearoa New Zealand in the last two decades, as outlined above, emphasised competitive individualism through a market discourse, state withdrawal from welfare support and a rejection of social rights. The climate for social service work has changed to one of reduced service provision by the state, within a culture of economic restraint, and increased family and individual responsibility.

In practice, this has led to contracting out by the state of many social services. Where in the past, government was seen by many as the primary provider of social services, successive Labour, then National governments moved provision in a number of directions through a system which separated funders and providers where funders contracted the services of providers. The system was based on an assumption that the market model was appropriate for delivering social services (Stansfield, 2001), and that separating the purchase and provision of services would provide greater transparency and accountability for public spending, and efficient achievement of clearly defined outputs (Higgins, 1997). The purchase of services through contracting emerged as one of the most contested policy initiatives of government (Stansfield, 2001).

Social services were moved variously toward the private sector, the not-for-profit sector, and individuals and families (Shaw, 1999). Social service work

[9] A marae is a village courtyard, the spiritual and symbolic centre of tribal affairs (Kawharu, 1989).

previously done by the then Department of Social Welfare or the Ministries of Health and Education was contracted out to many organisations such as Barnardos, the Open Home Foundation, the Salvation Army, CCS, Pathways, and a range of iwi-based social services. Prior to the 1980s, not-for-profit organisations had often played an innovative role in developing social services which had then become government provided services (Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party, 2001; Wilson, Hendricks, & Smithies, 2001). The shift from grants to contracts signified a policy shift from funding worthy organisations to ensure their survival, to using those organisations to supply clients with services defined as essential by the state (Nowland-Foreman, 1997).

Higgins (1997) points out that the shift has meant some significant trade offs for not-for-profit social service organisations. Social services became increasingly focussed on family therapy models and counselling during the 1980s and 1990s where in the past, staff in not-for-profit organisations were more able to engage in structural change-oriented community development work than their counterparts in government agencies (van Heugten, 2001). However contracting by government of services had made such work more difficult to fund and sustain (Higgins, 1997). Contracts often require specific measurable outputs but the "benefits of community development work, critical policy analysis, and advocacy for oppressed persons are less easily quantified" (van Heugten, 2001, p.10).

A particular site of contest occurs in the construction of community need, with various agents of government and the not-for-profit sector claiming the right to know the welfare needs of people in the community. Government officials used the contracting system to define what would be constructed as need and managed those contracts for social services through output categories and resource constraints. Contracting of social services was limited to the output classes developed by crown entities as a means of budgeting and assessing outcomes. The output classes then determined whether the needs of a family or person could be met (Cheyne et al., 2000). Resource limitations, for example, have determined the level of intervention for children considered to be at risk by

Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS)[10] in the 1990s (Cheyne et al., 2000). Stansfield (2001) contends that easily measured outputs do not always correspond to human need. Others have argued that while government departments may claim wide consultation in identifying groups and associated needs, people in local community organisations often don't feel consulted nor do they necessarily see the same needs (Robinson, 1993).

Some social service agencies have tailored their services to particular output categories in order to be funded, rather than responded directly to what might be constructed elsewhere as community need, in what has been called 'funder-capture' (Stansfield, 2001). Funding tends to be provided for specified community groups visible and related to various departmental goals. While government departments may claim wide consultation in identifying those groups and associated needs, people in local community organisations often don't feel consulted nor do they necessarily see the same needs (Robinson, 1993). Levesque (1996) warns that the contracting system can reduce not-for-profit organisations to being providers of state funded welfare, in effect reducing the potential for community development and for organisations in the not-for-profit sector to work cooperatively, to complement state services, to advocate for the community, and to critique state policy. Higgins (1997) argues that the contracting regime increased state control over the work of not-for-profit agencies. Although much of the language is about partnership and collaboration between community agencies and government, the contracting relationship may also involve remaking the not-for-profit sector in the image of government (Nowland-Foreman, 1997). Accountability measures for assessing contracts have also provided a way for the state to increase its control in the social services sector (O'Brien, 2001).

The contracting culture has provided both significant funding, and yet not enough funding, for many community based social services, many of which have

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[10] CYFS is the government agency and statutory body created out of the old Social Welfare Department, to administer a number of laws relating to families and children, and to contract out services provided for families, whanau and children.

grown significantly over the last two decades. Part of the move from state provided social services toward private sector and not-for-profit sector social services has been a reduction in state spending on social services. Harris and Eichbaum suggest that community based services in particular "have been cynically used as instruments of fiscal stabilisation" (1999, p.236). Government contracts provided some security and yet this security has been limited for most, who have still had to rely on philanthropic funding. At the same time, structural change and organisational overheads tend not to be funded (McMaster, 2001a). The higher costs associated with reporting on government contracts also tend not to be funded (Stansfield, 2001).

In addition to government funding, funding has come from a number of non-traditional pots: the growing community trusts established by the sale of community owned banks and power companies, considerable Tiriti settlements made by government to iwi as recompense for the taking of land, and an increasing number of philanthropic trusts established by various groups and individuals (Harris & Eichbaum, 1999).

2. Social service provision by not-for-profit organisations

Within the community or not-for-profit sector in this country, the number and range of social services has grown markedly since 1984 (Stansfield, 2001), with many having a social policy orientation, such as the food banks, refugee support groups, women's refuges, inner-city church missions, and so on (Harris & Eichbaum, 1999). Many people, particularly those in organisations such as food banks, would also argue that their organisations have grown in response to the growth in poverty and the underclass described by Garland (2001) as a consequence of neoliberal social policy. In the early 1990s, particularly after the benefit cuts, the numbers of individuals and families seeking help from community and church-based service, including food banks and budget advisors, grew significantly (Higgins, 1997; Jackman, 1993).

A number of people have argued that the needs of people served by the social services sector are higher and more complex than in the past, because of the

impacts of economic and social reform (Malcolm, Rivers, & Smyth, 1993). They contend this has placed a greater and more difficult load on community based social services. Working with violence, for example, is now recognised as a significant part of social service work (McMaster, 2001b). Many social service agencies have articulated a commitment to social justice, particularly to overcoming structural injustice, but they also comment on the tension between supporting people they work with and wanting to change structures creating the personal troubles and needs they see daily (Munford & Sanders, 1999). Much of their work capacity has been taken up by providing those services funded by government, though rarely fully funded, and therefore drawing on the organisations' own resources and often detracting from their other work (Higgins, 1997).

Although market discourse has been used by government in relation to the social services, there are some significant distinctions from purely private sector motivations. First, much of what is offered to social service 'consumers' is decided by the government through its contracting, so government officials decide the range and level of choices available, not the consumers or customers (O'Brien, 2001). Second, professionals such as social workers and counsellors do much of the referring of 'consumers' and so act as gatekeepers of access to social services.

Part of the managerialist shift has been to re-constitute people worked with as consumers motivated by self-interest in their purchase and consumption of welfare, and seeking to obtain maximum advantage from each transaction with a social service. So, for example, Osborne and Horner (1996) are able to suggest that not-for-profit organisations in Britain wishing to practice equal opportunities and anti-oppression both within and for the people using their services, need to see empowerment of service users as a core component of their overall quality service. They suggest good quality service and anti-oppressive practice are two sides of the same issue, and thus they link unproblematically anti-oppressive practice and management practice. Walker (1993), on the other hand, argues strongly that consumerism, through customer or client choice, is not the same as empowering the users of a welfare service.

Mooney (1997) argues that policy makers within a neoliberal framework also coopted the language of 'choice' and 'diversity' from feminist and anti-racist discourses, so that it appeared that consumers or clients now had a choice from a diverse range of organisations apparently able to respond flexibly to their diverse needs. The rhetoric of choice and diversity were used to bolster the values of individual autonomy and market-led economics. It appeared that the users of social services had more choices available to them, and yet the notion of choice is most meaningful for those who are already well resourced (Cheyne et al., 2000).

Many voluntary organisations can be said to work to mitigate social exclusion, in all of the ways the term is used. However the implications of the placing of social exclusion on the policy agenda are complex for not-for-profit social services (Billis, 2001). For example, some stigmatised groups may remain well off the government policy agenda, though not out of sight of at least some social service organisations. Billis (2001) suggests that the not-for-profit sector is probably able to do little to reduce poverty, despite the poverty focus in the 'social exclusion' current.

Strategic planning and quality management have also been argued to be a means of 'managing risk' in social service organisations (Duncan, 1997). Kenny (2002) argues that new models of practice in the not-for-profit sector are particularly influenced by the growing discourse around managing risk. The encouragement to manage risk has been described as one of the key gazes of contemporary social control (Beck, 1999). It is a gaze that seems closely related to the techniques of social control described earlier, in which risk is represented by those constructed as dangerous (Garland, 2001; Novak, 1997). The idea that social service organisations might *manage risk* seems to draw them both into a discourse about how they are organised, and the possibility of seeing their service as about managing those considered to be risky.

There has been an increasing trend toward 'professionalisation' of social service workers, particularly within not-for-profit social service organisations, as

government contracts have required qualified and trained staff, and staff in agencies have sought to have their work recognised as skilled, and their pay rates improved. In Aotearoa New Zealand, as for most feminised occupations, the pay rates remain low (*Watson Wyatt Report*, 2002). Increasing numbers of social workers, counsellors and therapists have been employed, and the number of tertiary qualifications available in these fields has grown significantly. Some of these changes have heightened tensions between paid and volunteer workers, and changed the balance of volunteer and paid staff numbers (Wilson et al., 2001). At the same time, there has been a growing rhetoric about the value of volunteering, actualised in the establishment of community based agencies focussing on volunteering.

Frumkin and Andre-Clark (2000) suggest that the rapid professionalisation in the sector has fed the move towards an increasing emphasis on performance measurement, associated with the import of managerialism into the sector:

> Many professionals want to bring a new rigor to their work and develop standards to measure their performance, as a basis for their own advancement within the field and for the development of an expert body of knowledge. Reengineering, TQM and benchmarking are appealing because they help justify the move from volunteer labour to well-compensated professional staff. (p.145)

Thompson (1993) argues that this professionalisation through performance management can function to de-politicise social service workers and organisations through requiring their compliance with managerially driven outcomes, in order to be regarded as successful.

3. Social services and families

Families were located as both the source of problems and the place for solutions in neoliberal social policy (Cheyne et al., 2000). Policy within the government department, CYFS, became more obviously oriented toward the family as the location for responsibility through the 1990s. Others contend that structural factors such as unemployment, underemployment and poverty impacted on families significantly, and particularly on women and children, as is discussed

further below. Such difficulties for families also affected social service organisations, which faced greater demands for practical help, emotional and psychological support, and support for people with long term, deep seated and complex difficulties. Furthermore, as Higgins (1997) points out, individuals and families came for assistance to social services to *survive* policy changes such as benefit cuts, rather than to *participate* in a community service, at the same time as not-for-profit social services were less able to provide advocacy and community development to encourage participation.

Much of the social service work in the not-for-profit sector has been aimed toward families and whanau, particularly towards improving parenting skills. Munford and Sanders (1999) note, however, that many parents are unavailable to parent because of the complex and difficult issues in their lives, some of which are related to structurally caused poverty. They argue that workers within the sector "must understand how continuing punitive social and economic policies will mean that families are less able to cope in their current environment." (1999, pp.218-219). Research conducted with families supported by Barnardos demonstrated the strong desire of families to change their circumstances, in contrast to the rhetoric of families as irresponsible or lacking motivation (Munford, 1997).

Concurrent with the focus on family based social services and concern about children living in poverty, has been a growing children's rights movement (Hawes, 1991). Over the same years, child abuse and neglect have emerged as significant social issues, though they are not new issues (Connolly, 2001b). Reporting of child abuse and neglect has increased many fold over the last decades, and levels of media interest and public concern have been high, although the tendency has been to blame individuals and families or to scapegoat social workers (Woodward, 1997).

During the 1980s, concern was expressed about the numbers of children coming into foster care and being shifted from foster home to foster home. There were also claims of institutional racism within the Department of Social Welfare and through the overwhelming professional power of government social workers,

enacted through the operation of the Children and Young Persons Act 1974. Over a number of years, including most recently, social service agencies have identified the operations of CYFS as being a key concern in their work (Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party, 2001). There have also been a number of government initiated reviews of CYFS and its predecessors. Most recently, The Brown Report (Brown, 2000) reviewed the work of CYFS in relation to the care and protection of children. The report notes the increasing numbers of children being taken into care, the under-resourcing of CYFS, and the need for a change in the organisational culture. Judge Brown also calls for a communitarian approach toward the profound obligations for the care of children.

As a consequence of the concerns raised in the 1980s, new legislation was passed regarding the care and protection of children. The Children, Young Persons and their Families Act (1989) separated youth offending from care and protection practices, and reinforced the need for family solutions rather than professional solutions to child care issues. The Act declared that decisions made on behalf of children were to be in both the interests of the child and the stability of the family or whanau. The primary decision-making mechanism became the Family Group Conference. The Act was designed to strengthen families and whanau and involve them in decisions about the care and protection of children. The Act did not make reporting of child abuse mandatory but strong inter-agency protocols were developed which promote the notification of suspected child abuse or neglect to CYFS and a public awareness programme to promote community responsiveness (Connolly, 2001b).

In response to criticism of social and therapeutic work with families which has been argued to re-create under-privilege, many social service providers are now working out of what has been called 'strengths-based practice'. Such practice is argued to acknowledge the strengths families do have, to use it to build their resilience and to take account of structural effects on people's lives (Munford & Sanders, 1999). Therapeutic work has also been criticised for maintaining the locus of blame and responsibility within individuals and families, independent of the social contexts within which they are located (Parker, 1999). In this country,

the Family Centre in Wellington has led the development of alternative social service work in their 'just therapy' approach (Waldegrave & Tamasese, 1993).

In the late 1990s, increasing attention to growing levels of poverty and to family focussed solutions led to the establishment of programmes such as Family Start and Strengthening Families. Both of these programmes attempt to coordinate work between state and not-for-profit agencies, and to design services which address the multiple needs of families. However, Cheyne, O'Brien and Belgrave point out that

> a series of important questions remains to be answered about these programmes, particularly in the areas of resourcing and the nature of the ideological framework shaping state actions. The focus on 'the family' does suggest that the shift towards family responsibility is sustained in these programmes. It remains to be seen whether: (1) this will continue to be associated with shifting of responsibility to inadequately funded not-for-profit agencies; (2) the family will continue to be identified as the locus of the problem with no attention to the structural dimensions of poverty and unemployment...(3) there will be adequate systems of accountability for agencies. (Cheyne et al., 2000, p.203)

O'Brien (2001) notes that the Strengthening Families programme, in which coordinators draw together the various government and community agencies working with families considered to be 'at risk', appears to have little to do with the circumstances surrounding 'families at risk', and lots to do with controlled interventions with families to ensure they meet their responsibilities. Concerns expressed by Maori about the colonising effects of programmes such as Strengthening Families are discussed below.

The development of these coordinated programs has also come out of the most recent apparent shifts in public policy rhetoric away from competition among organisations to collaboration, which has been recorded in a number of Western democracies (Osborne & Murray, 2000). Such calls come partly as a response to calls to avoid what is viewed as duplication among services, calls to use resources effectively and efficiently, and at the same time the critique of competitive individualism from within the sector itself (Benjamin, 1996).

4. Maori and social services

Maori structures and protocols for care and welfare were in place long before the arrival of the British settlers and Te Tiriti o Waitangi, through iwi, hapu and whanau structures, whakapapa, whanaungataunga (Nash, 2001), and wairuatanga[11] (Ruwhiu, 2001). The processes of colonisation, including the urbanisation of Maori away from their traditional iwi and hapu lands during the 1950s to 1970s, have made those structures and belief systems more difficult to sustain.

Matahaere-Atariki, Bertanees and Hoffman (2001) offer a stinging critique of both past and contemporary social service and social work practices in relation to the colonisation of Maori: "over the years, as Maori, we have been both intrigued and horrified at our representation within the literature of 'care' and 'empowerment'" (p.124). Using the Foucauldian notion of the gaze, they write that the language of helping is closely interwoven with the discourses that justified colonisation of Pacific peoples:

> Historically, the need to minister to indigenous communities has been a powerful justification for incursion into our lives. As we enter a new millenium, very little has changed - what is different is the language in which these old forms of control are being articulated. In particular the language of empowerment can very easily provide the justification for stricter management of iwi. (pp.130-131)

As an example, they suggest that the current Strengthening Families programme is a way in which government devolves responsibility to families further while re-substantiating the Western concept of the autonomous family separate from cultural, social and economic context. Yet the programme is able to be represented as neutral. They go on to suggest that the programme further marginalises Maori through this apparent neutrality, while re-constructing power among the group of professionals drawn in to the programme. They note that although the programme has had little response from iwi, it has continued to gain status as a credible strategy for "the management of 'at risk' families"

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[11] A collective sense of spiritualism.

(Matahaere-Atariki et al., 2001, p.131). This critique of social service as colonising and racist has similarities to critiques by theorists from other countries, such as Anleu (1999), of social services as a primary means of disciplining and controlling women and families.

The government provided welfare system in place prior to 1984 has been criticised by many Maori as a significant means of the colonisation of Maori. Through the 1980s, a task force was established to review the Department of Social Welfare in relation to its work for Maori, following activism by a group of Maori staff who claimed institutional racism occurred throughout the Department. The Report found that the Department of Social Welfare had done great violence to Maori values, structures and the well being of parents and children, and that social welfare had been a primary means of control of Maori by Pakeha (Walker, 1990). The Report clearly identified the causes of social problems as not being Maori individuals and society, but rather the structure and history of colonialism, and recommended most strongly that policies based on iwi values and structures were necessary (Spoonley, 1988).

As early as 1986, *Puao-te-ata-tu* (Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Maori Perspective for the Department of Social Welfare) recommended the government attack all forms of cultural and institutional racism and allocate an equitable share of resources, that a comprehensive approach be developed for all government dealings with Maori, and that initiatives of Maori themselves and the whole community be harnessed to address the difficult problems faced by many Maori (Orange, 1987). The Report was influential as a charter in the development of government policies for delivery of equity to Maori (Walker, 1990), though recent calls to re-visit the vision articulated in *Puao-te-ata-tu* also criticise the failure to grasp the impetus provided by the Report in the mid 80s for attention to wider social issues (Brown, 2000).

Activism challenging institutional racism through welfare systems was one of a range of Maori challenges to the processes of colonisation, which in turn was one of many movements for indigenous peoples happening in a number of places around the world (Fleras & Spoonley, 1999). For several decades, Maori have

called for greater autonomy in the delivery of social services to their own people (Culpitt, 1994a). Ruwhiu suggests that the "foundation stones of social work partnership, resistance, and activism for both Maori and non-Maori social workers have been refined on the raging fires of Te Tiriti o Waitangi" (2001, p.55).

At the same time in this country, neoliberal economic and social reform discourses intersected with discourses surrounding the rights of indigenous peoples, Maori as tangata whenua, and the claims surrounding Te Tiriti. Changes in social policy provided recent governments with a politically viable way to respond to these calls for change and resources by Maori (Culpitt, 1994b). In a sense it has been an opening through the neoliberal language of consumers and individual choice which has been used by government to provide different systems of provision for different groups, including most recently the provision of social services which are 'for Maori, by Maori' and services provided through the 'closing the gaps'[12] initiatives.

In particular, government began to fund iwi-based social services in recognition that "social services which help to define a community should be mediated by the iwi themselves" (Culpitt, 1994b). Culpitt suggests that recognising the authority of iwi is a significant separatist and anti-bureaucratic move, a move toward parallel development of social services. Much of the criticism of state provided social services was directed at assumptions made by the "professional experts" in these services (Cheyne et al., 2000).[13] The response by Maori was to call for Maori initiated, led and controlled services, so that cultural appropriateness and safety were far more likely and so that the solutions might be more efficacious.

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[12] The 'closing the gaps' policy was announced by the Prime Minister of the Labour Coalition Government, Helen Clark, in 2000. It referred to an intent to reduce the gaps in well-being between Maori and Pakeha. A significant media backlash to the term led to it being abandoned a year later, though many of the initiatives within it continued (Humpage & Fleras, 2001).

[13] In Britain, Ahmed (Ahmed, 1990) notes that racism and oppressive social work practices conflict with the 'caring' ideal of social work. She notes the ways many white social workers 'clientise' Black women, maintaining social control through professional expertise.

Many strong Maori women of mana[14] and rank in their communities have led the development of health and welfare organisations. Within these organisations they have been able to attend to both the micropolitics of children, whanau and health issues, and the macropolitics of land, language and culture (Rei, 1998). Some Maori groups have been able to take on service contracts for health, welfare and education because of the separation of funder, provider and consumer through the social service reforms. Organisations and programmes such as Tu Tangata, Kohanga Reo and Maatua Whangai[15] have mushroomed. There have also been calls to recognise urban Maori authorities as social service providers, as well as iwi-based social services (Levine, 2001). In addition, the government contracting system enabled government funders, for whom policy commitments to bicultural development are clear, to require Pakeha social services to address issues around their provision of services for Maori (Stansfield, 2001).

These moves toward self-determination for Maori, need to be seen in the context of neoliberal social and economic changes also occurring (Kelsey, 1995, 1999). Maori calls to care for their own came at the same time as the government wished to substantially reduce spending on social welfare (Durie, 1998). Ironically this new contracting culture occurred in a context of high unemployment and poverty for many Maori. Culpitt (1994a) argues that to use contracting as a means of achieving parallel development would be costly; conversely, using contracting as a means of reducing social service delivery costs would work against re-casting social services in a biculturally appropriate way. CYFS contracting with iwi social services is reported to have been unduly protracted, to only partially fund services, and to include sometimes crippling compliance costs. Iwi social services report that they have little negotiating power for their work (Brown, 2000). What was lacking was a strong analysis of

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[14] 'Mana' refers to authority, prestige and sovereignty (Kawharu, 1989).

[15] Tu Tangata is a programme supporting Maori in schools. Kohanga Reo are Maori language nests for pre-school children, designed both to support children and their whanau and to re-juvenate Maori as a language. Maatua whangai are organisations working in youth justice for Maori.

the larger economic reforms and their effects on Maori. Biculturalism became a part of practice which often asked for more from Maori, who were often the least resourced to be able to provide (Cheyne et al., 2000).

5. Women and social services

Connolly (2001a) argues that a gendered perspective on social policy and practice is essential. The social services sector is a strongly feminised sector, since most paid and unpaid workers are women, and most of those receiving services are women. Women are particularly affected by the provision of social services because they do the bulk of both the paid and unpaid caring work in our society. Neoliberal social policy takes for granted or fails to see the ongoing sexual division of labour, in which men are responsible for paid employment outside the home, and women are responsible for domestic and caring work within the home (Cheyne et al., 2000).

The call to work with families often comes out of the social construction of 'bad parents' - often 'bad mothers' (Chase & Rogers, 2001) - whose inadequate parenting skills are blamed for many of the social problems of our country, including child abuse and neglect, rising crime and youth suicide rates. Woodward (1997) notes that women are often subsumed under the category 'family'. And yet the family includes specific sets of ideas about women as mothers, caring for and nurturing others: "women have long been the target of state intervention often where concerns with women as mothers was linked with state anxiety about children especially and family life in general" (Woodward, 1997, p.84). Carabine (2001) uses a Foucauldian analysis of sexuality and social policy to describe the production of lone mothers as 'bad mothers' who produce delinquent youths and girls who become lone mothers themselves. These 'bad mothers' are vilified as undeserving of welfare assistance, irresponsible and dangerous.

A number of feminist researchers seeking to understand child abuse and neglect have continued to challenge existing assumptions about the privacy of the home and the responsibility of individuals, particularly mothers (Woodward, 1997).

They have been concerned to challenge 'mother-blaming', to explore the complexities of child abuse, and to disentangle some of the assumptions about what constitutes child abuse, who is responsible, and why it occurs. In this country, I have also heard conversations about the complexities of ethnicity in relation to child abuse. Knowledge about child abuse and neglect among Maori and Pakeha, and who may be agents of knowing, is a contested and difficult site.

Feminist researchers and writers have challenged the assumption of moral decline of various groups of women. Davis (1991), for example, suggests that teenage mothers are doing just what girls are taught to do – to become adult women through childbearing and caring:

> I would venture to say that many young women make conscious decisions to bear children in order to convince themselves that they are alive and creative human beings. As a consequence of this choice they are also characterized as immoral for not marrying the fathers of their children. (1991, p.482)

She points out that poor, unwed mothers are constructed as criminals in the United States, and that the statistics used to demonstrate an increase in the numbers of single mothers are very misleading. Such statistics are often used to build hysteria about the apparent demise of the nuclear family, and yet many young and single mothers are part of cultural groups for whom the nuclear family never existed anyway. In another powerful example, Young (1997) has challenged the rhetoric of moral decline surrounding women who are addicted to drugs and pregnant.

There have also been concerns expressed about the role of social service organisations in maintaining oppression of certain groups of women. Foucaldian analysis has been used to understand the minute by minute practices of social policy and welfare, by focussing on actual encounters between 'clients' or 'consumers' and those who provide welfare services (Healy, 1999; Pease & Fook, 1999). Using the notion of the exercise of power, the approach enables welfare recipients to be constructed as agents themselves, rather than passive recipients in welfare interactions (Crinall, 1999). Some of this work has also

been informed by feminist theory highlighting voice, as described earlier in Chapter 4.

Robertson (2001) suggests that the marginalisation of women is complexly intertwined with social work, including social work around violence, despite the commitment of social work theory and practice to empowering those who are oppressed (Worrall, 2001). Women have provided the infrastructure of social service provision, both formally and informally, and played a key role in the development of community based agencies. Some of these agencies have been seen as moralistic, yet many women within them have also pushed for social reform (Worrall, 2001). Some feminists have been particularly concerned with the changing organisation of social services. Warren (1997), for example, demonstrates the way in which the move from hospitalised or institutionalised care for the mentally ill to 'community care' has led to more unpaid and difficult caring work for women. In the 1980s, some feminist-led social service interventions, such as that provided by Women's Refuges, gained credibility, though their feminist commitments were often at odds with the processes of the contracting culture (Worrall, 2001). Women's Refuge, along with several other feminist organisations, is notable for its sustained commitment to parallel Maori and tauiwi[16] structures to honour Te Tiriti (Huygens, 2001).

The shift of much social service provision to the not-for-profit sector maintained the connection between social service provision and women's work, though as large government contracts became available, a number of people, including some men, moved from management positions in government organisations to management positions in community based social services, or to independent consultancy positions. There has been some suggestion that women's influence on policy was weakened by such shifts (Tennant, 2001). Although there is a substantial feminist literature on the relation of gender to caring work, there appears to be little recent analysis of the intersections between gender and social service work in Aoteoroa New Zealand.

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[16] Tauiwi refers to all those settlers in Aotearoa New Zealand who are not Maori.

6. Church-based social services

In Aotearoa New Zealand, a number of faith based, Christian social services have played a key role in the development of the social services sector. The Agency described in this thesis is an organisation which has grown out of and is strongly affiliated to the Anglican church in Aotearoa New Zealand. There is a growing literature on the nature of religious based not-for-profit organisations and the theology which informs their work, though many writers have also noted the paucity of research in the area (Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party, 2001; Froelich, 1999). Most acknowledge the significance of the values base from which these organisations are constructed as part of the discourses of those organisations. Some also acknowledge the significance of religious based organisations in the development of the not-for-profit sector over the last century (Tennant, 2001).

a. Church affiliated social services in Aotearoa New Zealand

In Aotearoa New Zealand, most religious based social service organisations are connected to various Christian churches, though the nature of the relationship varies considerably. In the mainstream churches, such as the Anglican, Catholic, Methodist and Presbyterian churches in this country, social services are more likely to be independently governed, than social services run as part of more evangelical churches, who are more likely to resist separating faith and service (Gronbjerg & Nelson, 1998).

Changes in the larger environment, such as in the relationships between church and state, and social services and state, also affect the relationship between church and social service. A number of authors have pointed out the increasing tendency of governments to look to church affiliated organisations to provide welfare services (Froelich, 1999; Wittberg, 2000). Billis (2001) suggests that in Britain, churches and other religious organisations may find themselves being called on to play a key role in providing social services because of their location in communities, although resource constraints may keep their care informal and less organised. A number of church policy statements in this country made it

clear that if church social service organisations were to take more welfare responsibility, then additional funding would be needed from either government or the private sector:

> Churches are found in all of our local communities, and they will see themselves called to work with other voluntary agencies and with the government to ensure that the needy are cared for and the hungry are fed. There is plenty of room for closer and more creative cooperation between these sectors. Possibly, church social services could effectively expand, given the opportunity and the necessary financial resourcing. (Davis, 1998, p.60)

Church-affiliated social services are currently a significant part of the social service and not-for-profit sector in this country. The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS), for example, is made up of members from Anglican Care, the Baptist Union, Catholic Social Services, the Methodist Church, Presbyterian Support NZ and the Salvation Army. The members deliver social services in approximately 550 sites around the country, in eight main areas: child and family services, services for older people, foodbank and emergency services, housing, budgeting, disability, addictions and employment (New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, 2002). The Council identifies its commitments as

- giving priority to the poor and vulnerable member of our society
- Te Tiriti o Waitangi,

...by

- articulating a vision for NZ Society
- developing and critiquing policy
- advocating for appropriate policies, services and resources
- providing information and networking services to members (2002, p.x)

These commitments reflect the ethos of many church-affiliated social services in this country, as is discussed further below.

b. Theology, social justice and social service

The theology of the church from which a social service emanates affects the kind of service offered (Froelich, 1999), and the nature of the relationships between those served by the social service organisation and members of the organisation. Froelich (1999) comments on the increasing complexities that occur for faith based social services when they serve populations different from themselves. While for people in some denominations providing social service is a way to proselytise, for other, usually mainstream and liberal churches, it is simply a response to the church's call to be of service (Gronbjerg & Nelson, 1998). Wittberg (2000) notes that currently religious based institutions often face pressure to de-couple their faith and services, and that the funding relationship to government can make this particularly complex. Some social services respond by making their services more secular. Others work from a more generic theology than that of the denomination they are affiliated to.

Church-affiliated social services also influence the churches to which they are connected. Wittberg (2000) comments that it has been well documented that denominational social service institutions have undergone profound changes over recent decades, to the point where some critics have asked if they can still be considered distinctively religious. However, she goes on to demonstrate ways in which social service and other religious institutions, such as hospitals and schools, have served historically to maintain the churches to which they are affiliated. They may take a role in defining and transmitting the religion's culture and identity, as a place in which members put their faith into practice, and a place for recruiting members and training leaders.

People in many religious denominations construct social justice issues as a key principle of their faith, and the development of their social services is often an outcome of that concern with social justice. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the focus of Christian based social services has tended to come out of social justice discourses based on both distributive notions of justice and the recognition justice discourse surrounding Te Tiriti. These two strands of the construction of social justice are represented, for example, in the two key commitments of

NZCCSS outlined above. They are also demonstrated within the Anglican Church of Aotearoa New Zealand which operates through a three tikanga[17] parallel structure for Pakeha, Maori and Pacific peoples (Melbourne, n.d.).

In distributive justice terms, the Christian churches have made a number of public calls for government to take responsibility to care for those considered to be poor and needy members of society, including calling for increased taxes to support welfare. During the 1990s, church organisations expressed most strongly their indignation at government's withdrawal from welfare provision and referral of those seeking help to church and other voluntary agencies (McClure, 1998). Calls for distributive justice have been argued within the churches as social justice concerns emanating from the teaching of Jesus Christ and the Hebrew scriptures (Davis, 1998). They include the rights of all people to adequate housing, food, clothing, rest, education, health care, employment and security in old age.

Government is often depicted as having a key role in ensuring the rights to welfare of all citizens, though as Davis (1998) points out Christians would be divided in their views of the role of government. He also suggests that the New Testament does not privilege government as the provider of welfare but that welfare comes from a combination of government, civil, public and private action. Organisations such as the Social Justice Commission of the Anglican Church, and current practices such as regular meetings of church leaders with the Prime Minister, provide a space in which some Christians claim their interest in influencing social policy and maintain the construction of the state as having a key role in welfare.

A number of Christian social service leaders have articulated their beliefs about the reasons Christians provide social services. Piri Simpson, for example, writes from the perspective of a Christian committed to working in a Christian welfare agency in Aotearoa New Zealand:

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[17] Tikanga refers to Maori customary laws and practices, or cultural protocol.

> It is the Christian's personal experience and knowledge of God's love and justice which is the factor which motivates one to be involved with social service. Jesus Christ insists in His teaching that we must be just and merciful because he is a God of Justice and Mercy. What is central to the character of God must occupy a central place in his people. The reason for 'doing' is in response to Jesus Christ, not just because of the obvious need. (1993, p.122)

She suggests that compassion, the essential importance, worth and dignity of every individual in God's eyes, and responsible stewardship are key principles for Christian social service.

During the 1980s, a number of churches expressed their growing commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and added to their distributive justice theology, a distinctly bicultural theology (Phillipps, 2001). Tolich (1998), writing from the perspective of the Methodist church in this country, adds to the theology of service an applied Christianity which includes a commitment to a pluralist democracy, the partnership covenant set out in Te Tiriti, equity, social justice and the right to self-determination for all peoples. He goes on to outline the commitments of the church to reflecting those values in the services provided by enriching the services offered through the involvement of a worshipping community of faith, giving priority to promoting the rights and well being of the least advantaged, sharing hospitality for all, seeking beneficial relationships between tangata whenua and Pakeha, and building empowering relationships between individuals, parishes and communities.

Tolich (1998) outlines what he sees as the relationship between theology and faith based social service. For Christians, the Bible and other traditions provide central resources for reflecting on issues in social and economic transformation. In contrast to the literalist position of many fundamental and evangelical churches, he comments that biblical texts, like all texts, are ambiguous and contradictory, as is the practice of Christianity throughout history (Tolich, 1998). Recent developments in hermeneutics and contextual theology provide methodologies for re-reading texts and local contexts in a critical manner (Darragh, 1995).

Feminist theology too has contributed to critical readings of both the Bible and Christianity in the community, particularly in relation to the positions of women in both (Fiorenza, 1983; McFague, 1988; Ross & Hilkert, 1995) and to provide resources for "an alternative human imaginary" (Jasper, 2001). Liberation theology, a movement arising in Latin America during the 1960 and 1970s, focussed many people in churches on poverty and all forms of oppression (Vieira, 2000). The theology influenced strongly calls for commitment to social justice work. International gatherings of churches through the 1970s consistently called for both recognition of the structural exploitation of the poor and the churches' complicity in those structures (John, 1998).

Recently, critiques of neoliberal economic and social policy have been developed by people in both churches and church-based social services. Tolich (1998), for example, suggests that Christians need a healthy regard for the violations of the church which have been part of colonisation, oppression and domestication. He advises that currently, Christian providers of services need to beware of the "temptation to grow the distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor" (p.290) and then to punish or sanction those who have become the 'undeserving'. He suggests that the neoliberal view of community involvement as a means of softening welfare budget reductions holds little sense of belonging, solidarity or mutual care. Critiques of neoliberal individualism also influence theology. Wittberg (2000), for example, draws together literature commenting on the individualistic focus in many evangelical Christian denominations. Further, she suggests that this kind of focus on individual salvation, individual conscience and preference, and the individual as the site of faith, can reduce the involvement of some churches in community and social service.

The relationships and intersections among churches, Christianity, theology, social policy, social justice and social services are many and complex. In the inquiry described here they were no less complex. In Part II of this thesis I provide background information about the Agency, describe the emergent method of the inquiry, and discuss some aspects of subjectivity in relation to the action inquiry.

Part II

Waikato Anglican Social Services, Cross Rose Centre and the action inquiry: purposes, methods, process, relationships

While Part I of this thesis provided a description of the broad context for the action research and the academic conversation to which this thesis contributes, Parts II and III describe the action inquiry as it emerged.

Part II of this thesis includes three chapters. In Chapter 7 introductory information about Waikato Anglican Social Services (the Agency) and Cross Rose Centre (the Centre) and a description of the purposes of this action inquiry are presented. In Chapter 8 the events, actions and processes for the research are described. In Chapter 9 I examine the action inquiry as first person, second person and third person research. This examination is used as a basis for discussion of the construction of action inquiry as first, second and third person research, in the light of poststructural research concerns with subjectivity and reflexivity.

Chapter 7

The purposes of the action inquiry in Waikato Anglican Social Services

A. Introduction

In this chapter I begin with some brief comments about my own voice in this text as I tell my story of the inquiry and the opportunities provided for other people involved in the action inquiry to read and comment on drafts of this thesis. I then provide some background information about Waikato Anglican Social Services and Cross Rose Centre, before going on to describe the layering of inquiry purposes which emerged in the early stages of the inquiry.

B. Voice in this text

I have written this thesis in first person, with the deliberate intent of locating myself as the author and researcher, and as the inscriber of the story presented. In doing so I take up a particular subject position made available through both feminist and poststructural challenges to the traditional academic disembodied voice of the apparently neutral and authoritative researcher. As Jones (1992) puts it: 'I am in the text'. In choosing this subject position, I am acknowledging the politics of what I create, describe and maintain through this text, and the politics of my location as a researcher. These and other subject positions available to me in the inquiry, sometimes contested, sometimes claimed, are explored further in Chapter 9.

Drawing on the work of Haraway (1988), Jones (1992) also expresses the need for an "explicit incompleteness, tentativeness and partiality" (p.26) in academic writing so as to invite the personal responses of others and provide a basis for located and therefore rational social research and writing. These commitments to

noticing and exploring the constructedness of my own account and to writing in a way which is tentative and provisional also seem appropriate within the action research discourse I have chosen. I also want to acknowledge the partial nature of what it is possible to write in a doctoral thesis, a partiality I have sometimes felt keenly. I could never hope to communicate in this text all that I experienced and learned, nor all that was constructed through the inquiry.

The account written in this thesis has been read in draft form by Karen Morrison Hume (referred to as Karen from here on), the Director of the Agency, and the person most closely associated with the inquiry as a co-researcher. Karen's comments and memories led to conversations in which we reflected on the inquiry and my construction of the text. A draft of the thesis was also made available to staff members of the Agency, so that they could read and comment, though not all staff members involved in the inquiry were still at the Agency and it was not possible to provide all those who weren't with the opportunity to comment. I was particularly keen to ensure that staff members felt safe about what I had written, and to give them opportunity to re-interpret or to reflect from the vantage point of a year or so later. Not all staff members read the thesis; for some, the academic format was not accessible. Where I have quoted the words of participants in the inquiry these are written in italics. Where I have quoted others, I have sought permission of the person quoted to do so.

C. Waikato Anglican Social Services and Cross Rose Centre

Waikato Anglican Social Services is physically situated in Hamilton, Aotearoa New Zealand. It is a social service agency, separately incorporated, but affiliated with the Anglican Church, particularly with the Waikato Diocese.[18] The Anglican Church, established by English missionaries, has had a presence in Aotearoa New Zealand since the early 1880s. Since 1992 the Church has

[18] Waikato is the geographical region in the centre of the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand, within which Hamilton city is located.

operated out of a three tikanga model with separate parallel structures for Pakeha, Maori and Polynesian peoples. This shift has been seen as representative of the equality and right to be different among the three cultural streams (Melbourne, n.d.).

The Agency is governed by a Board of 7-8 trustees whom Karen, as Director, formally reports to. During the time I was involved with the Agency there were between 10 and 15 part-time and fulltime staff employed within the Agency, in a variety of social work, social advocacy, counselling, support, coordination and administrative roles. A small group of volunteers also contributed to the work of the Agency, including volunteers in chaplaincy roles.

The Agency had identified its mission statement in 1998 as *justice through service*. It provided a range of services over the years I was involved, including a low cost counselling service; social advocacy; supervised accommodation and support for men; food bank support; budget advice; accommodation for women, and for women and their children in the Centre which is described further below; and referrals to other agencies.

In early 2000, the Agency moved from a location as a single social service agency in a house near the centre city, to premises at Te Ara Hou, a social service village established that same year, in which several social service agencies are situated. Te Ara Hou had initially been built and run for many years as a residential institution for intellectually handicapped children. More recently it had been the conference centre and offices of the Catholic Diocese for the region. It comprised a number of office buildings, accommodation wings, meeting rooms, a chapel and other facilities, set in spacious grounds on the boundary of the city, though still on a main bus route. Karen had been a key person in the development of the Combined Christian Social Service Trust which had purchased and established Te Ara Hou. The development had been a huge undertaking and accomplishment. The Agency premises at Te Ara Hou included offices and rooms for staff, meeting rooms, counselling rooms, and the residential area which became Cross Rose Centre.

The Centre had been developed because Karen and a group of others had identified a need for accommodation for women and for women and their children wishing to rebuild their lives after crisis. This residential service was envisaged as different to the kind of emergency accommodation offered for women escaping domestic violence, a service offered by Women's Refuges throughout the country. Karen had led a group called CHARG (Combined Housing Action Research Group) which had commissioned research to clarify the need for a range of venues for supported accommodation in the city (Combined Housing Action Research Group, 1998) and to persuade the Hamilton City Council to be involved in resourcing, at least for a short time, such accommodation.

The Centre opened in early 2000 as part of the Te Ara Hou village, with space for up to 54 people, a communal kitchen, several shared large rooms, and large gardens. It was described in the first brochure as

> *providing transitional accommodation and learning opportunities for women and their children.*

The brochure went on to say

> *Our vision is to build healthy communities by promoting structural changes, modelling community and facilitating transition for families choosing to make positive change within a caring environment*
>
> > *By providing a caring and encouraging environment for families who are willing to make positive changes in their lives/lifestyles, or who simply need time out to reflect, or to consider future options.*
> >
> > *By providing life skills development, education, training, counselling, social advocacy and support.*
> >
> > *By ensuring the paramouncy of child safety at all times.*

Women living in the Centre were offered and expected to attend various programmes, usually run by other agencies, such as Stopping Violence Programmes. Counselling and social advocacy were available from counsellors and social workers. A Coordinator with a wide brief was employed in the

Centre. A number of volunteers took on a range of support roles, such as chaplaincy, childcare, education, kitchen assistance, and so on.

A number of staff had articulated a strong commitment to both the Treaty of Waitangi[19], and to issues of social justice. While the Centre offered support for individual women, there was a keen awareness of the social setting within which women and children came to be in a position of need. There was an intention expressed in a number of places, to act as both social advocates and social change agents.

In 2002 as the action inquiry described in this thesis drew to a close, Karen described the Agency this way[20]:

> *I am going to begin by describing Waikato Anglican Social Services, the work that we do and the dreams that we have....*
>
> *The work began in 1985 when one part-time person and several volunteers cared for men in a condemned building in the main street of Hamilton. These men were regarded as 'derelicts', many of them suffering from alcoholism, mental illness and the multiple effects of poverty and homelessness. In 1992 after the building had been demolished, this simple work was acknowledged as an important contribution to the social service work with men in the city and appropriate accommodation was sought through Housing New Zealand. This government agency provided the buildings which Anglican Social Services utilised and managed under a special tenancy agreement for the*

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[19] I use the English 'Treaty of Waitangi' from this point because this is the version of the Treaty/ Te Tiriti most staff members were familiar with and which was discussed in various ways in the inquiry.

[20] The description is drawn from a keynote paper Karen and I were invited to give at the Conference of the Australia New Zealand Third Sector Research Society in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand (Gatenby & Hume, 2002). The paper was presented as a conversation between the two of us.

provision of support for men in transition from prison, men with a mental illness, and men who would never live independently in the wider community. The Agency was at this point then formally constituted through the Anglican synod and established as a charitable trust. The work with men who have been stigmatised, demonised and isolated continues to this day. Thus began the first tentative steps towards pursuing and promoting justice for a marginalised group in our community.

The next steps were even more radical. The Agency began to work in a therapeutic model with men who had sexually abused children. One of the nation's worst kept secrets was being exposed and this work was part of that process. By its very existence, this social service was purposefully pursuing social justice for children, for families and paradoxically for the men who had abused. The programme struggled because funders didn't want to support it – they had other things in mind for men who committed such abominable acts. It created an awareness that many people could not deal with and, to be fair, did not know how to deal with. In the end, the programme could not be sustained because of lack of funding and because the Agency struggled to create an infrastructure that could support such a demanding and significant work at that stage of its life. However it remains as one of the cornerstones to the service justice juxtaposition emerging in the Agency.

In the first strategic plan developed with two mentors in 1998, we established the mission of the Agency as 'to provide social justice through service to the community' which later became known simply as 'justice through service'. In that same document came the first articulation of our mission as being 'motivated by the spirit of liberatory justice and loving and compassionate concern found in the Christian tradition....' This remains as the source of inspiration for our work.

Throughout these years, the Agency found itself in the midst of the political and economic phenomenon known as "Rogernomics", the new ideology of the market which powerfully and effectively was manoeuvred into the not-for-profit sector. In Anglican Social Services we were mindful and critical of this powerful new force in our midst and began to explore ways to resist, although paradoxically the economic reforms were also part of a context in which not-for-profit agencies were able to grow. Resistance came in the form of two new collaborative ventures which were motivated by the notion of working in solidarity, rather than the management imperative of effectiveness through efficiency.

Two of the most significant alliances were borne out of a desire to subvert the marketplace practice of competition and the paramountcy of the individual. Through the voluntary and combined efforts of a number of people working in the sector, a group was formed to address the housing and homelessness issues within our city – Combined Housing Action Research Group (CHARG). It was through this work that the issue of homelessness for women beyond the crisis of refuge accommodation was identified. This formed the basis for the proposal to establish a community for women, and women and their children, which eventually became the reality of Cross Rose Centre.

Through the connections within the CHARG group, it became known that a very large property which had conference centre facilities was for sale. Through conversations it became apparent that this property would not only be a suitable venue to establish the community for women and children, but could also be utilised as a village for social services. Again this proposal was an expression of solidarity and resistance, rather than an expression of marketplace efficiency and blandness. Through networking and visioning, conversations, discussions and prayer, the dream and hope became a lived reality when in November 1999, Waikato Anglican Social Services moved into the newly named village, Te Ara

Hou (the new way) along with three other social services choosing to work collaboratively.

Three months later, the residential community for women and women with children, was opened.

Through the first half of 2000, over the first months of the Centre's development, I became involved as a researcher with the Agency, until the end of 2001. The reasons for choosing an action research approach are described in the next section.

D. Choosing to use action and feminist research discourses

There were a number of reasons for choosing the discourses of action and feminist research for locating this inquiry. First, there seemed to be a fit between the language used in relation to the Agency and the Centre and the language of both action and feminist research. In the Agency, the vision for the Centre was articulated often as *building community* with the women. The mission was for *justice through service*. Key concepts for both included empowerment, liberation and transformation, the pursuit of justice through changing social structures and systems, participation and democratisation, community development, and reflection. Action and participatory research also has a history of use in the community sector and in non-governmental people's movements which seemed to match the positioning of the Agency in the not-for-profit sector at this time.

Some of both the action research and the feminist research literature also contains some notable commitments to plural ways of knowing, to relationship building, and to the possibility that research might also be an activity which involves researchers and participants emotionally and spiritually (Flood, 2001; Park, 2001; Reason, 1993, 1998a, 1998b). In the Agency there was similarly a

commitment to recognising women as physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual beings in relationship with each other.

The action research described here is feminist in a number of other ways too, not least because it is aimed at improving the lives of women, through working with those who exercise professional power in relation to a group of women identified as living in very difficult situations. Like more recent feminist research and theorising (Kilby & Lury, 2000), there was also an explicit intent to work with the construction of both race and gender, and other issues of identity as they emerged.

There were several reasons I judged it appropriate at this time to work primarily with the women who were on the staff of the Centre, rather than with the women living in the Centre. As a Pakeha, middle class and university educated woman, it seemed more appropriate to work with the mainly Pakeha women on the staff, some of whom were also university educated or professionally qualified, rather than with the women who lived in the Centre, many of whom were Maori. The politics of research at this time, for good reason as a number of Maori and others have pointed out (Johnson, 1998; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), require that we consider who might ethically do research with women, the majority of whom were likely to be Maori, lower class and with little formal education (Combined Housing Action Research Group, 1998). I was also aware that acting as an inquirer with the staff would involve me in various power relations with both the women and the staff of the Centre.

At that point, another research project by another group of researchers, which would be with the women in the Centre, was also still a possibility. My own academic and practical experience was more in line with organisational communication, gender, and management (see, for example, Gatenby & Humphries, 1992; Gatenby & Jones, 1995), rather than with women who had experienced domestic violence, abuse, drug and alcohol addictions, and poverty. Those latter experiences were also not the experiences of my own life. I assumed that I would need to have a background in psychology, counselling or

social work to be able to work with these women (an assumption I later challenged as is described in Chapter 10).

Working with the staff meant a focus on their practice, and much action research has traditionally had a focus on professional practice, particularly in health and welfare fields, as Hart and Bond (1995) point out. In addition, some researchers and activists have suggested that the very practices of some 'helping' agencies often compound the oppression of the very groups of women they set out to support (Ahmed, 1990; Hart & Bond, 1995). Social institutions such as social service organisations may be complicit in the disciplining of women to be 'good mothers' and 'good women' (Anleu, 1999; Woodward, 1997). It seemed to me that a research discourse was required which paid careful attention to the power issues in the practice of research and the potential for research to contribute to oppression. Aspects of feminist, participatory and action research discourses appeared to do this.

I also thought that the actions of the staff of the Centre would be crucial in its development and therefore in the possibilities for the women who would live there, and the Centre and the inquiry should both serve the wellbeing of those women. At the end of the inquiry, Karen confirmed my thoughts:

> *I think the greatest challenge is really with the staff...they have so much power...and some of it's about you know, keeping themselves, keeping a sense of control for themselves without feeling that they're not floundering around in this great big problem which is so complex it's overwhelming...and getting alternate ways of thinking...they're always hoping that there's another way, or they want to understand what is going on here....*

With all of these research commitments in mind I worked with staff to develop the action inquiry purposes described below. In this thesis I use the term 'staff members' to refer to those employees and volunteers who worked with the women and children who lived in Cross Rose Centre, and the term 'the women'

to refer to the women who lived in the Centre, though I note that the majority of the staff members were also women.

E. Developing some action inquiry purposes

During the first half of 2000, I began exploring the possibilities for doing an action research project around the development of the Centre[21]. Within this research, I would work with the staff of the Agency through the first years of this new social service. Over the first six months, layers of purposes for the research emerged. Below I describe some theoretical issues around the power and practice of establishing research purpose in action research. I then describe the purposes of this research in two ways: first, as they were presented in my doctoral enrolment; second, as they emerged with the staff of the Agency.

1. Meaning, empowerment and participation in establishing research aims

The need for a set of research questions to guide this research and by which this work might be judged seemed to me a complex requirement. This is something many feminist researchers and action researchers have commented on. Reason (1994b), for example, suggests that purpose in action research is not unitary, not a setting of objectives or targets, not a managerial activity, but rather a holding of a sense of purpose, a nesting of a number of layer of purposes. Developing goals, objectives and targets may even alienate researchers from their practice. It is difficult to articulate fully a set of questions at the beginning, when purpose in action research may be both initiating and emergent or processual (Reason, 2001), and is inextricably interwoven with position, the starting point of inquiry, and a congruency of intentions (Goff, 2001). Cunningham suggests that a significant aim of action research is to be engaged in an organisation or group undergoing change: "The word 'engagement' comes from the existentialist literature – *engager* – and means being committed to or engaged" (1993, p.61).

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[21] The process through which I became involved is described in Chapter 8.

I was also concerned that the asking of research questions implied the finding of answers and knew that I was committed to more tentative local understandings, than the term 'answers' might imply. Sometimes other academics or members of the Agency wanted me to describe a 'problem' that I was researching, and indeed much writing about action research suggests that it should have a problem focus. I am inclined to agree with Cunningham (1993) who suggests that the term 'problem' is misleading. It is not meant to imply that there is something wrong, so much as there is a focus on a process of change and a way of addressing issues.

To explore the complexity of purpose is congruent with a commitment to reflexivity in research, a commitment to exploring and reflecting on the interrelationships among research process, the roles of the researcher, theoretical structures used and the data collected (Harvey, 1990). I believed that the setting of questions was in itself a political activity because of the embeddedness of power in who gets to ask questions and the way in which they are asked. Advocates of participatory research have traditionally dealt with this by insisting that research questions be negotiated with participants in the research. There are several overlapping justifications for this kind of initial participation. It should function to shift power and ownership from the researcher toward the subjects of the research, thus aiming at democratisation through the research process. It should ensure the research is useful to the subjects of the research by identifying issues of genuine concern to those people. It should model and practice self-determination.

While wishing to hold those participative aims, I also wished to acknowledge the complexity of negotiating research questions because participants are differently resourced and enabled to negotiate (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000a) and come with sometimes conflicting interests in the research. Ristock and Pennell (1996) draw on feminist and postmodern[22] theory to argue for empowering research in which empowerment happens through thinking consciously about power

[22] They explicitly use the term postmodern to refer to both postmodern and poststructural theory.

relations, cultural context and social action. As Barraket (1999) points out in her doctoral thesis, traditional approaches to action research assume researchers have a great deal of power which is able to be and should be given over to co-researchers or participants as part of the democratising process. Barraket notes that her attempts to 'hand over power' became both paralysing and patronising.

Therefore, in the next section I present as a reflexive and multilayered account, a set of questions from my proposal for doctoral enrolment at the University, and my thoughts about the purposes of the research, and the ways others at the Agency thought about the purpose of the research. Being reflexive about the development of these questions, issues, wonderings or ponderings does not indicate a lack of clarity or of purpose. I lay these out to provide an acknowledgement of the complexity of every step of social research, including the development of the research purpose or questions. The process also demonstrates my commitment and the commitment of staff in the Agency to work together in the action inquiry.

2. The inquiry purposes

The general idea for what this research might be about and ways I might be engaged with the organisation came out of early discussion with Karen. Karen and I had already met in a number of places and I knew that we had some overlapping interests and commitments to social justice, the Treaty of Waitangi, and improving the lives of women.[23] The research purposes emerged in several ways, particularly through the first six months of my involvement in the Agency.

a. The doctoral questions

After six months of provisional enrolment in this doctorate, and of being with the Agency, I wrote the following research questions within the longer proposal required by the university to confirm my enrolment:

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[23] The relationship between Karen and I as a site of second person research is explored in Chapter 9.

A. How do people in a social service enact a mission for *justice through service*? How can I, as an action researcher, work with staff in that enactment?

B. What are the discourses surrounding the work that mitigate against justice? Exploring these will involve articulating discourses of managerialism and economic rationalism, of Anglican Christianity and the church as social institution, of individualism and therapy as empowerment, and of biculturalism.

C. Part of articulating these discourses involves a sense of wanting to explore their potential for creating and maintaining both injustice and justice. Where are the "structural flaws and unexpected crevices" within the discourses (Ransom, 1997, p.25) which might be places for just action (Ferguson, 1999)?

D. What is the potential of action inquiry as a way of being for a social service organisation? Can action research contribute to the work of Waikato Anglican Social Services both in serving those in hardship, improving their lives, and changing social and political policy?

E. What kind of theology might be inscribed by the practice of social justice in this particular setting?

I needed to persuade a committee of university academics that I was doing work worthy of doctoral enrolment, and such a requirement and much of the kind of meaning-making in which I was engaging, was instantiated within particular academic discourses. The questions were written certain ways because of that. In an early draft of the proposal I gave the questions the heading 'Research ponderings, wonderings and questions' and phrased some as statements, some as questions. I was advised to change them and the heading for the sake of gaining approval for enrolment. Of course writing a research proposal, with the focus on establishing purpose and questions, method and a schedule, contradicts the very

notions of collaboration and emergence in action research, as did the process of gaining ethical approval for the research required by the university. The questions were also useful in forums where visibly working within Western academic discourse was required, such as applications for scholarships and at some academic conferences.

The questions were also a guide for me[24] for those aspects of the inquiry in which I occupied a subject position as an academic with an intent to engage with some particular academic discourses, in particular those of action research, poststructural theory and social policy and social service aimed at women in Aotearoa New Zealand. They were a guide for exploring knowledge given substance within those discourses. Other theoretical questions did emerge through the inquiry including questions about the intersections between action research and poststructural theory, and action research and neoliberal social policy.

I showed the set of questions to Karen, before submitting the proposal. Karen saw immediately how they fitted with the task of confirming my doctoral enrolment. She automatically assumed they were appropriate for the kinds of discussion they were meant for, and had no interest in negotiating them with me, though she was also clearly interested in conversations about the ideas embedded in them.

At an inquiry workshop within the Agency, I read them out to the staff and a number of Board members who were present. The staff were impressed; the questions sounded intellectual. One staff member said she was more than happy to leave the research to me; this kind of thinking was not for her. Others engaged in very brief academic conversation with me, but were also not interested in negotiating these particular questions.

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[24] Presumably also for supervisors and examiners.

b. The inquiry purpose in the Agency

Fairfax (2000) points out that most practitioners are not preoccupied with the abstract questions framed by academics and that community group discussion and questioning tend to be discursively framed in much more concrete and pressing terms. The politics of action research lie in the complex interweaving of practical experience and abstract theorising (Hart & Bond, 1995). Doing action research seemed to me to be alive with this tension. The abstract and academic questions I framed within academic discourse were relevant to the work of the Agency, and they often framed my own analysis and informed my participation and reflection. For the staff of the Agency, however, the questions were framed differently, and I often felt myself moving between these frames. Fundamental to my involvement in the Agency as a researcher was my commitment to the work of the Agency and especially the work of Cross Rose Centre. This included a commitment to work in ways appropriate within the Agency and to move with the Agency as its tasks and priorities shifted.

As for much empowering action research, the negotiation of what this research was about happened both informally and formally over some time. The key question for all of us, often expressed in a variety of ways, was:

> How can we really make a difference in the lives of the women who come to live in Cross Rose Centre?

For the staff, this was their commitment in their work in the Centre. They clearly constructed the research and me as wanting to contribute to that aim and I presented myself in that way in my first meetings with staff, by talking about my interest in research which was participative and action–oriented, and my long term interest in the lives of women. It was particularly significant to be able to work with staff in their first years of the development of Cross Rose Centre. There was an air of excitement, passion, hope, and intent to try something new and to think about what was being tried.

Several times during the first six months I attempted to facilitate involvement of the staff in setting the research questions, but with little success. As Barraket (1999) experienced, participants did not want to control the research; they

wanted me to be 'the researcher' and to set the questions. Nevertheless, in a number of informal ways, a number of questions for the action inquiry emerged.

These are the research aims which emerged in working with the staff of the Agency:

A. What does social justice mean in Cross Rose Centre and Waikato Anglican Social Services, and how can we contribute to it?

B. What things create injustice for us and for the women in Cross Rose Centre, and how might we be a part of that injustice?

C. How can we resist injustice here?

D. How can Cross Rose Centre make a difference in the lives of the women and the children who live there?

E. How can Cross Rose Centre be a good place for both Maori and Pakeha women and children who live there?

I think much of what these questions are about is encouraging both critical thinking and reflective practice and having them affect the provision of service.

Different individuals did express different ideas about what I was doing. The chairman of the Trust Board which first approved my involvement with the Agency, a banker, later remarked that he hoped my research would be useful in finding better, *more efficient and effective*, ways of managing the organisation. A later chairwoman, who knew of my past research with women, saw the research as helping staff members think about improving the lives of oppressed women. People thus took up different subject positions in relation to the purpose of the action inquiry. Increasingly the group of 5-6 staff members who worked in the Centre, and with whom I met every week through the course of the inquiry, talked increasingly of my being there to help them reflect on what they were doing in their work.

My own thinking about my purpose developed in the following way: I was contributing to the work of the Agency, especially the work in developing Cross Rose Centre. To do that, I was helping staff think about what they do, how they do it, what the difficulties are, and what they achieve. Here is how Karen commented on my articulation of these aims in a joint conference paper[25] some months after my involvement in the Agency had ended:

> *The research aims expressed by Bev through meetings and conversations created a connection of mutual commitment to explore through critical thinking and reflection the ways in which Cross Rose Centre could be developed as a place where service and justice-making could be achieved. Also it became apparent that we would be facing into the ways in which we could be complicit in the perpetuation of injustice in the lives of women. There had been experiences throughout the process of establishing Cross Rose that indicated we would move between the light and shadow of this justice-seeking and would be confronted by the many dilemmas that such a pursuit produces.*

The issues raised in Karen's comments regarding the perpetuation of injustice are taken up in Chapters 10 and 11, particularly through using poststructural theory to understand the discourses operating in the Centre and providing the possibilities for the work of the Centre. In the next Chapter I describe the emergent method and processes of the action inquiry.

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[25] The description is drawn from the keynote paper Karen and I gave at the Conference of the Australia New Zealand Third Sector Research Society in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand (Gatenby & Hume, 2002).

Chapter 8

The emerging method and actions: my account

A. Introduction

In Chapters 3 and 4 I presented an account of the development of action research, including the central notions of researching 'with people', encouraging and participating in both action and reflection, the potential for action research to contribute to professional practice, including practice in health and welfare settings, and the aims for liberation or transformation through participation. Just as many advocates of action research have argued for multiple ways of knowing, so have many argued for multiple methods in action research. In the action research literature, discussion of research method tends to include reference to the emergent nature of the method and the requirement to involve a community of inquiry in both action and reflection as a way of being (Reason, 1994a). Relationship building and community meetings are often described as central to the process (Gatenby & Humphries, 1996; Gummesson, 1991; Reason, 1994b).

In this chapter I describe the methods and actions which emerged as this action inquiry. I think of the actions as the life of the inquiry in the world. Although relationships were at the heart of the inquiry, they are referred to only briefly in this chapter, since in the next chapter, I explicitly use the framework of first, second and third person research to provide a reflexive account of subjectivity in the inquiry, including the personal and relational inquiry which emerged.

B. The emergent method

In the following sections I describe the initial phase of establishing the action inquiry, the particular methods and actions that developed, the way those methods and actions were interwoven with emerging themes, and the period of

drawing the inquiry to a close. A chronological summary of the research events which formed this inquiry is provided in Table 1 at the end of this chapter.

1. Initiating the inquiry

Late 1999, in the very early stages of the development of Cross Rose Centre, I had been employed as a contract researcher to write a proposal for a funding application for a cross-disciplinary team to do research with the women who would live at Cross Rose Centre. This was a research team including Karen and Wendy, the first Coordinator of the Centre, and academic staff from the University of Waikato and the Waikato Institute of Technology. The funding application was not successful and this research did not go ahead.

I had also heard about the development of both Te Ara Hou and Cross Rose Centre when Karen spoke inspirationally and movingly of the dreams for this work at the local cooperating parish[26] my family and I are part of, just along the street from Te Ara Hou. I wondered if there was a way I might contribute. At the time, I was also seriously considering enrolling in a doctorate.

Knowing that Karen and Wendy were open to the inclusion of research as part of the development of the Centre, I approached Karen to ask if I might undertake doctoral research with the Agency, around the development of the Centre, and using some kind of participative action research approach. I described my past commitments to participative and feminist research and showed her samples of my past writing, including my writing regarding the careers of women, and writing for bereaved parents. I talked about the parallels between the commitments I had heard her express around participation, transformation and improving the lives of women and my own commitments in terms of research interests and processes.

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[26] In Aotearoa New Zealand cooperating parishes combine Methodist, Anglican and Presbyterian churches.

Karen responded with an immediate 'yes' to my request, and I began working toward beginning the research. At this point, there was some time lapse while the setting up of the Centre continued, while I searched for scholarship funding which would enable me to enrol in a doctorate, and then began the enrolment process, and while I was introduced to the people involved in the Agency in various ways. As Treleaven (1994) points out, the initiating phase of action research is particularly important in generating participation. First a structure or space needed to be established within which the inquiry could take place and then within that, ways and opportunities of participating needed to be established. It did take some time, patience and care to get to the point at which I could say the inquiry had formally begun.

During that waiting time of approximately 6 months, I participated in a community consultation initiated by Karen to inform the establishment of the Centre, and to gather together people from other agencies who might have some involvement in the work of the Centre. I attended the formal blessing and opening of Te Ara Hou. I also participated in a consultation with local Maori and Maori service providers. I supervised a group of polytechnic community health students who did a three month project with the first group of women in the Centre. Within this project, Maori and Pakeha student nurses worked with the Maori and Pakeha women in the Centre to depict symbolically through a jointly crafted quilt the significant aspects of their lives and their hopes for the future, and to involve traditional Maori healing (such as mirimiri[27]) as part of the Centre.

Also during this time, Karen introduced me to the staff, to the Board and to David Moxon, who was the Bishop of the Waikato diocese, a Board member and a close friend and supporter of Karen. At each introduction I talked about my own background as an academic, including my interest in research on women's lives, my commitments to participatory research and my hope that we might work together as researchers to think about the development of the Centre. I

[27] Mirimiri is a form of massage.

spoke briefly about action and participatory research as a way of researching which involves working with people, rather than researching on people, including being willing to take action and to reflect on those actions. I talked about my interest in stories and conversations, and in facilitating reflection.

In mid-2000, my enrolment in a doctorate was approved, I was awarded a scholarship, the Centre was operating, and I was able to be at the Agency regularly. Thus the inquiry formally began.

2. Methods and actions

An underlying assumption in this inquiry is that the research process is itself part of the social construction of knowledge and a deliberate intervention in meaning-making. The emphasis is *not* on finding research methods which accurately represent some apparently objective truth waiting to be discovered (or uncovered) by an apparently neutral, rational and objective researcher, but rather to work consciously with a group of people in the construction of meaning, or 'truth' and 'knowledge' in a particular setting at a particular time.

I see the method as having had six aspects:

a. the ways in which I lived the research as my own inquiry.

b. the ways in which I, as a researcher, and the research as a project became part of daily life in the Agency.

c. the ways ideas and meaning-making happened in conversation and relationship, and were articulated more deliberately.

d. the ways teaching and learning became a feature of the process.

e. the ways reflection became a greater part of the practices of the Agency.

f. the ways the ideas and meaning-making moved beyond the Agency.

This way of categorising the methods, actions and processes, amplifies the movement between first, second and third person research described in Chapter 3 and teased out reflexively in Chapter 9. Each of the six aspects is described in the next sections, and is summarised in Table 2 at the end of this chapter.

a. Living the research as my own inquiry

There were several habits I developed to ensure my own regular reflection and reflexivity as part of the inquiry. Probably the most significant was in keeping a research diary. Hart and Bond (1995) list a number of uses of a research diary: as a record of emerging "facts", as a place for trying out ideas, as a running record of the research, as a memory aid, and as a place for linking ideas, including ideas from the literature. All of these were important parts of my diary writing. I used it daily to record significant things people said, issues and ideas which were emerging, my responses to what was going on, plans for the inquiry, plans for this thesis, stories which emerged or which I wrote, and so on. In looking back over my diary, there is an increasing focus on examining my own subjectivity within the inquiry. Diary writing, as a means of reflection, meaning-making and planning, was also made part of the life of some of the women in the Centre who were encouraged to keep a journal, and offered opportunities to work in their journals as part of the opportunities available to them in the Centre.

Writing stories and drafts of parts of this thesis were also an important part of my own inquiry. There were times when I chose to spend less time at the Agency because I needed to focus on writing. I experienced the work of the Agency as incredibly fast-paced and dynamic, and being able to write sometimes meant removing myself from that experience.

I also made a commitment to myself to read widely, both within and beyond academic literature. A number of novels informed my thinking, including Winona LaDuke's *Last Standing Woman*, (1997) the story of seven generations of the Anishinaabe, a Native American Indian tribe, as they face the ongoing colonisation of Western settlers, and battle alcoholism, abuse, and the removal of their children, and fight to regain their land. I passed the novel on to others in the Agency and it fed our conversations.

Part of my first person inquiry became a habit of checking the new book display in the university library every week. I saw and read things which I would not otherwise have read, and which added to my feel for the swirling eddies of

current debates and academic meaning-making. Browsing Steve Taylor's *Sociology: Issues and debates* (2000) was useful for locating my research academically, for knowing what it was and what it was not. Seeing and handling the range of feminist books was comforting on the days when the world around me seemed to have learned little from feminism. It was a habit of inquiry which sought at once to broaden and deepen my thinking and the contribution I could make to the Agency, and which helped me delineate what I could write about and what would be part of the larger inquiry of my life. The considerable number of new texts about the 'third' or 'not-for-profit' or 'community' sector gave weight to my awareness of calls for the sector to be a significant part of citizenship and democracy, and thus the ongoing construction of the sector, at least in academic discourses, which I was a part of.

I also often found local texts from this country. The University of Waikato library has always had an intent to reflect its commitments to the Treaty of Waitangi in its holdings, and seeing new books by and about Maori, and about living in Aotearoa New Zealand (and knowing the complexities of debates about publishing of indigenous knowledge and histories) fed my sense of the significance of local research and of the context in which this research is embedded. Seeing beautiful books with photos of Maori taonga next to government reports on poverty, crime, mental health, and child abuse statistics spoke powerfully to me of the tensions of research and action in this place at this time, and of the importance of finding better ways. The cover first, and then the title, and then the contents, and then the text, of Ziff and Rao's *Borrowed power: essays on cultural appropriation* (1997) reminded me forcefully of the potential for hegemony and ongoing colonisation in my own research.

I also found texts which were immediately useful to staff in the Agency, such as statistical information on the position of women and children, changing legal requirements, government reports, case studies, and commentaries on professional practice. Connolly's *New Zealand Social Work* (2001) was useful to me and a number of staff members because it included a range of current articles about different approaches to social work, including feminist and radical

approaches, and critiques from Maori perspectives. I saw new books, which I knew would feed Karen's inquiry and our conversations. For example, just as we were beginning to discuss the often forgotten intersection of class with both gender and race[28], I found bell hooks' *Where we stand: Class matters* (2000) in the new book display. It seemed to me that doctoral study includes the privilege of having time to read and think, and that part of this inquiry should be making available that reading and thinking for others also, while always being aware of the potential for academic work to contribute to both justice and injustice.

Walking across to the library each week was a physical and psychological acknowledgement that I was nested in a community of inquiry, in addition to the community at the Agency, and that this was a community which valued academic pursuit, for all its differences and debates about what constituted or should constitute such pursuit. During the second half of 2000 I was also part-time lecturing at the University of Waikato, teaching a fourth year course on 'Managing not-for-profit organisations' which meant that material on the not-for-profit sector was often in the forefront of my mind.

I was also committed to this inquiry as including both spiritual practice and theological inquiry. Prayer was a part of both the life of the Agency and also of my own inquiry. Two women from outside of the Agency and I met over several months as a feminist theology reading group. One of the women was a retired Methodist minister with a wonderful knowledge and library of key feminist theological texts. My reading and thinking was extended significantly by participation in this group. I also attended seminars by Professor Walter Brueggeman and Dr John Spong, two internationally acclaimed theologians, when each visited our city.

b. Making the research and me part of daily life in the Agency

For the first 6 months of the research, I spent three days a week at the Agency, which meant that after some time people got very used to me being around. I

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[28] Some people believe that this country is a classless society.

usually sat at a desk in the open plan office, often reading or writing. I also tried to be practically helpful – pitching in when there were chores to be done (such as gardening or making cups of tea). I believe that staff did become comfortable with me as a contributor to the work and life of the Agency: after one discussion in October 2000, Karen commented, *is there any doubt that you are a member of the team now?* At one point when badges were made for all staff members so that women in the Centre could know who staff members were without having to ask, a badge with my name and 'Researcher' underneath was included.

My days at the Agency for approximately 18 months included every Wednesday, which meant I could participate in the Agency and the Centre staff meetings which happened every Wednesday morning. In a sense, these staff meetings were the community gatherings at the heart of much participatory and action research. They usually began with some kind of reading or offering from different staff members, and included notices and discussion of various issues.

At these meetings I often participated by asking questions to encourage reflection, sometimes provocative questions. For example at a Cross Rose Centre meeting after the first Coordinator of the Centre had resigned, when staff were discussing what kind of person they might look for in the role, I asked whether the person needed to be Maori, given that the majority of women in the Centre were Maori. Several staff individually thanked me for asking that question later, indicating that it had been on their minds but had seemed difficult to ask. Sometimes I believe I also helped articulate philosophical differences underpinning difficult or controversial discussions. I also regularly used the staff meetings to ask for input into the process of the inquiry and to provide opportunities for the staff to re-direct it or to make offers or suggestions for further reflection. During my final report and discussion with staff at the end of this inquiry, one staff member commented:

> *I think looking back to those Cross Rose meetings, when Bev's contribution became so invaluable that when it wasn't there it was missed, and so there was something that Bev was introducing into the*

group that I think was offering new reflections and new ways of seeing and understanding different perspectives....I can think of that as an example of where we've been changed.

At the beginning of 2001, I reduced my regular time at the Agency to one day a week so that I would have more time to write and to plan specific events such as the workshops which emerged, though I was always present on Wednesdays and some times for several days when particular events were occurring. For example, workshops run through the later part of 2001 involved extra days, as did attending significant meetings such as staff retreats or the 'visioning' time held in July 2001.

I also facilitated parts of staff retreats and workshops, which are described later, and participated in both the development of the significant 'visioning' meeting in July 2001 and the meeting itself, at which the vision and mission were re-articulated, as is discussed further in Chapter 11. I was also a participant in several meetings at which significant developments in the Centre were articulated.

c. Working with ideas through conversation and relationship

A significant aspect of being part of the place and developing relationships with the staff of the Agency was being available for conversations, so that together we could work with ideas and reflect on the work of the Centre. I made it clear from the beginning that I was keen to talk with people about things they were thinking about and ideas we were working with. And people did seek me out. One of the social advocates, for example, asked if I would sit and talk with her about feminism. Another sought me out to talk about Treaty issues in the Centre. A counsellor wanted to reflect on his work dealing with perpetrators of sexual abuse. A volunteer wanted to reflect on the effects of managerialism on the establishment of Te Ara Hou.

Many of the conversations were with Karen and we developed a particularly close relationship through our conversations. At times, as occasionally with

other staff too, we would realise that we were exploring something significant and either I or Karen would suggest we tape our conversation. These taped conversations were later transcribed and kept by me. I also taped and transcribed my final report and discussion with staff as the inquiry was drawing to a close.

During my first months there I spoke several times about reflecting on the ways we create our worlds through our conversations. People began to pick up on this and to comment on significant conversations, and to focus on conversations as the building blocks of relationships. Sometimes they would challenge themselves about conversations which created the people they worked with in certain negative ways. Karen, for example, determined that the people they worked with would not be called clients nor consumers, but rather the women in Cross Rose. These habits of inquiry into how we construct our worlds led to several of the strands of thinking which emerged.

There was a growing awareness of language. This awareness was reflected in the work of some of the staff with the women in the Centre. For example, Karen chose to lead a discussion with the women who had expressed their wish to reduce the violence in their lives, about the violence constructed through their language. Like the diary or journal writing described above, this was one of several examples where the action inquiry with the staff modelled a way of working with the women in the Centre.

At one particular staff meeting, when a debate developed with two clearly opposing views being expressed, I talked about the Western habit of constructing dichotomies or binaries (Cixous, 1981), and the feminist skill of re-constructing "either/or" dichotomies into "both...and" statements, as ways of acknowledging the complexities of people, experience and issues. For some staff this became a useful 'tool' in their inquiry kit. It was particularly useful in discussions about the women in the Centre, which sometimes framed women as either bad or good, as is discussed further in Chapter 10. Treleaven (2001) also describes the value of being able to deconstruct binaries in her action research with academic women.

In the early days of the inquiry I had also spoken about my interest in stories and the significance of stories in meaning-making. For a while I was known among staff as the Agency 'story teller', which included both telling stories and collecting stories. Fairfax (2000) points out that community organising groups tend to use stories as their language while academics are trained to use the language of abstract concepts. He argues for the need for action researchers to recognise the storied language of community organisations.

The word 'story' was meaningful in the Agency. People spoke of the stories of the men and women served by the Agency, and the need to be respectful of those stories. It was a word chosen consciously to resist the language of professional social service in which people were clients with case histories articulated by social workers and counsellors. It was meant as a word of solidarity with and respect for the women in the Centre. Staff and residents alike had their own stories and came together in this place of shared stories. 'Story' was also a meaningful word for those who identified the Christian gospel as a set of stories.

Stories were an action in the Agency and in this inquiry, in the way that Colombo (2003) describes, because they were significant meaning-making events constructing the work itself and the inquiry, and encouraging reflexivity. Staff would seek me out to re-count an event and we would talk about possible meanings, what the story might mean for them or for other people in the story (or sometimes not in the story). At times I have chosen to interweave stories in this thesis. Like Pyrch and Castillo in their desire to share stories from indigenous wisdom in a way which is "inviting and opening" (2000, p.379) for their readers, I hope that the stories here allow other quiet though insistent voices to be heard. Sometimes in meetings, staff members would look at me and indicate that they thought there was a significant story in the conversation. As Treleaven (1994) points out, stories told within a group can be a means of building relationships between story tellers, of identifying themes among stories and constructing knowledge based on lived experiences.

d. Teaching/learning and discussing

There were a number of specific workshops or discussions which emerged in the inquiry. The first of these was planned and facilitated near the beginning of the inquiry while the next four emerged some months later. The workshops are described below. Like Treleaven (1994; 2001), I conceive of the inquiry as holding a space open in which things can and do happen and from which structure, albeit often ambiguous, emerges. In this case, structure emerged through a series of workshops.

i. Workshop on inquiry

In December 2000 Karen and I chose to facilitate a workshop for staff and interested Board members, in which we reported on our recent trip to the 'Emerging Approaches to Inquiry' conference in Stroud, England (described later), and introduced staff to the idea of first person, second person and third person inquiry. We wanted to give staff a taste of the opportunities we had had offered to us, and to acknowledge their support of our attending the conference. The workshop was an opportunity to develop inquiry skills and to put them to use to reflect on both the social justice work of the Agency and the emergent action inquiry which is the focus of this thesis. An outline of the workshop is given in Appendix 1.

Several staff members chose to share their reflections with everybody in the workshop. One staff member, for example, told a story about a necklace with a missing link. In the past he had been preoccupied by the fate and isolation of that missing link, but more recently he had seen the story as primarily about a necklace which was no longer whole. He used the metaphor to describe his changing way of thinking about communities and people who may be seen as missing links in various ways. For him, social justice had become about making the necklace whole again. Other staff fed back their thinking and talking about their work as interwoven with their spiritual commitments, in a number of cases, their Christian faith.

Several staff commented with passion on the value of the time which had been set aside for reflection. They talked about the rush and the busyness of their day to day work and their desire for more time to reflect on their work, both alone and with others. One Board member thanked us for the *gift* of the workshop and compared it to a Diocesan meeting he had attended the day before in which strategic planning had been the focus and method. He noted the vivid contrast and expressed his appreciation of what could be achieved using inquiry as a way of working and being together.

Later, in 2001, Karen and I began to talk about ways we could draw staff into more of our conversations. We began to talk about the staff needing more information and some specific opportunities to discuss certain issues. We were both feeling frustrated by some of our attempts to encourage reflection and discussion, and decided that making some specific space available and providing resources and information more formally might be useful. We conceived of a series of workshops which I would facilitate on the following topics:

1. discourses
2. empowering women
3. working biculturally
4. changes in the community sector

Each of these is described more fully below.

ii. Workshop on discourses

The theoretical concept of 'discourse' came to have a very practical application in the research. When I had been in the Agency for some months I realised I was frustrated by a way of talking among staff which suggested that transformation was not possible, that some women and children were oppressed and that was just the way the world was, and would always be. When conversations became reflective or critical (in the social science sense) they were often closed down by comments beginning with *the reality is* or *that's just human nature* or *its common sense* or *the truth is*. These references to truth, reality and human nature were used to hide the constructedness of truth and knowledge, to prevent reflection or reflexivity, and to close down some conversations. It seemed there

was little possibility of social justice when there was an assumption that what we know and experience is inevitable, despite the vision for transformation through the Agency's work.

I noticed too that among counselling staff in particular, the phrase *I feel* was used at the beginning of sentences as a truth claim also. It was a way of prefacing statements, often about the women in the Centre, which indicated 'this is my truth and therefore you can not disagree' and 'I have already reflected on this and do not need to be affected by your reflection'. In my view, it was a way of claiming a particular subject position and exercising power to close down some conversations.

After several long conversations with Karen we conceived of a workshop with staff in which we might challenge this truth-making. (For an outline of the workshop, see Appendix 2.) It seemed to me that discourse theory might be used to open up a conversation about the nature of truth, about the various positions we take up as truth-makers, the impacts of our truth-making on others and our work, and the particulars of the discourses and subject positions available to staff in the Agency at this time.

In the workshop, in June 2001, I introduced briefly the concepts of positivism and postpositivism, modernity and postmodernity, and discourses. I used Eagleton's (1983) definition of discourses as a set of communication acts or strategies and a process for making meaning. Weedon's (1997) delineation of the effects of discourses was also useful:

A given discourse regulates

1. what is known and what can be known
2. what is done and said and what can be done and said
3. our sense of self, and the particular identities that takes the form of
4. the power issues that permeate all of these.

I used the example of traditional Western medicine as a dominant discourse in Western countries, with other discourses, such as that of 'alternative' medicine

being developed in resistance to it. Participants quickly understood this example, and drew it out further in our discussion.

We were then able to talk about the effects of phrases such as *the truth is*, *the reality is*, *that's human nature, it's natural* and *it's inevitable*. I posed a set of questions for all of us for the times we fall into those phrases:

Why am I saying this?

What does it construct?

What does it cover or hide?

Who does it silence?

We were also able to begin to discuss the dominant discourses which informed their work, and the ways in which they might try to resist some of those discourses, choose deliberately to use them, or attempt to work from alternatives. These discourses and resistance are discussed in Chapters 10 and 11. A discussion that took place during the workshop about power was referred to often later, with staff sometimes reminding each other with a phrase they coined to summarise the discussion: *power is all around us*. They used the phrase to challenge comments from others indicating they 'had no power', or indeed that the women in the Centre 'had no power'. It was a shorthand way of saying we are involved in the exercise and relations of power all the time.

At the close of the day, several staff did express a sense of seeing and thinking differently. One participant commented, *it has been like being taken to the top of the mountain for a much larger view of the world,* and asked for more of these opportunities. However for a few others the discussion was uncomfortable. Challenging the truths on which they based their work and their sense of themselves was inevitably difficult and caused some anger. In retrospect, I could have expected this more than I did. The workshop did provide a base for the later workshops by challenging people to think about truth, knowledge, and their contemporary context.

iii. Workshop on empowering women

In October 2001, I facilitated a workshop on the idea of empowering women (see Appendix 3). This topic was chosen because sometimes the aim of the Centre was expressed as *empowering women* and many of the conversations were about what was possible for women. Karen and I had also spoken at length about the way in which gender, particularly 'womanliness' and "motherliness" was constantly being constructed and re-constructed in the conversations regarding the women in the Centre.

We chose to invite the staff of another social service agency in the city who worked with mothers parenting alone, to share the day, which was held at an Anglican retreat on the outskirts of the city. At the time Karen and I spoke of using the workshop to build closer relationships with women in the other agency in deliberate resistance to the discourse of competitive marketing of social services. It was a conscious decision to build collaborative relationships which would benefit the women who used both services, the staff and the agencies. The workshop was as much about building relationships as it was about the discussion.

I sent out an invitation to all the women staff involved in the Centre and the women in the other agency, together with a range of readings about the construction of gender. The readings included cartoons, poetry, fundamental Christian writing about how women should behave, narratives by Maori women, articles about women's work, and so on. Later some participants, particularly from the other agency, commented that having a set of readings was too much like academic work and that I had mistakenly assumed they would have time to read. I had sent the readings in the spirit of an offering just for those who wished to take it up, so the comments were a reminder of the position I occupied as an academic woman and the tensions in that position.

The agenda for the workshop was framed around thinking about the idea of empowering women and ways we try to do that. Participants were given the opportunity to set the agenda and decide how they wanted to work and who they

wanted to work with. My introductory comments included making it clear that participants could choose to work in all kinds of ways, such as using art, writing, talking, music, or movement, and that they might choose to work alone or together, as Maori or Pakeha, lesbian or heterosexual, older and younger women, or in any other grouping. I articulated my assumptions that reflecting on our own practice is worthwhile and creative, that we can inquire together and alone, and that we want to be self-conscious about participating in what the idea of 'woman' means right now, in this place.

The participants chose to work first of all alone or in pairs to think about how 'woman' is constructed in the various institutions around us. Two participants created a sculpture using a Barbie doll in a house setting, to express the idea that women have to be beautiful, slim, intelligent, wonderful mothers who do housework. A number talked about images of women as 'sex objects'. Some participants drew their ideas, others talked and wrote. All chose to share with the whole group their ideas and creations. Out of this sharing came a discussion about the construction of gender as ongoing and everyday. Some weeks later, two of the women fed back to me that two things I had said in the discussion had stayed with them and provoked a great deal of thought: *gender permeates everything* and *whatever it is that we call 'natural' are the things we should pay attention to*. There was considerable discussion about labelling and changing 'knowledge' including changing knowledge about what constituted mental illness in women.

At one point I was asked to give more information about the social and political context for social services such as the two agencies provide. I talked about the notion of four sectors: public, private, community and domestic, and the changing relations between these, including the import of managerialism, the contract culture between government and community organisations, growing calls for professionalism and the growth of community based social services. Participants reflected briefly on the development of the two agencies as part of that context.

At the close of our day together, participants asked for further opportunities to meet and support each other and to talk about their work. They saw the day as very beneficial. Although I had hoped for more reflexivity about their practice, I suspect that the relationship building needed to happen first and that a good beginning had been made.

iv. Workshop on social and economic policy, and the community sector

In the next workshop (summarised in Appendix 4), I shared the kind of information provided in chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis, as a way of providing a larger context for Te Ara Hou, the Agency, the Centre, and the work of the staff. One of the staff members had been part of the Agency since its very early days with only two part-time staff. Others had been there for a number of years. As I described the social and economic policies of the last decade and a half, they fitted in the story of the Agency and the changes in the work. We noted that the growth of the Agency and the work around poverty and exclusion had been part of a larger context. Staff members noted the irony of the growth of their work and resources in the community sector, which had been made possible by the same set of economic policies that had also made their work more necessary through increasing poverty and need.

The workshop provoked a great deal of discussion. Karen and Donna, the second Coordinator of the Centre, commented that they would like to run a similar workshop for the women in the Centre, because it gave explanations for the larger systemic factors within which their lives were embedded, and indeed they did embed the discussion within a number of conversations with the women in the Centre. The information provided alternatives to blaming the individual women in the Centre for their circumstances. A number of staff members made commitments to reflect on the ways workers in the social service sector can become victims, and at the same time re-create the same position for those they work with. Several also re-articulated their intent to be 'activists' through their work. Karen commented that she would like theological discussion to follow the workshop. At the end of the workshop she also wrote on the white board a new

name she was proposing for Waikato Anglican Social Services, 'Anglican Action'.

v. Workshop on working biculturally

The last workshop was planned as part of a series of workshops facilitated by a number of people involved in the Agency regarding working biculturally and honouring the Treaty of Waitangi. In a number of informal conversations and at a number of meetings there had been discussion about and some tension around the work of the Agency for Maori. Government funders were also calling for evidence of commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi.

At the time, Te Aopehirangi, the kaiawhina[29] in the Centre, was completing study in a Maori counselling programme and as one of her practical assignments, she chose to run a workshop on the Treaty of Waitangi. For many of us this workshop was extremely moving, as we learned more about the impacts of Western colonisation for Maori in this country. I watched a number of staff become increasingly committed to working in ways which might attempt to provide redress.

The workshop I facilitated was designed to follow on from this workshop, as a Pakeha contribution to the discussion. A summary of the workshop is provided in Appendix 5. A number of very difficult issues emerged in the workshop, and there was considerable tension, as those among staff who did not see a need to honour The Treaty or work differently for Maori, expressed their views, often in ways others found offensive. It was a difficult time, uncomfortable and upsetting for many of us. It did, however, mark a determination in Karen to lead the Agency more firmly in its bicultural development. Two other workshops had been planned by other people, but I suspect that after this discomforting workshop, others were hesitant to facilitate any further group discussions. Just as the workshops strengthened calls for Treaty-led work, so they also strengthened resistance to the discourses of bicultural development and Treaty-led practice.

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[29] A kaiawhina is a person who provides care and support, usually an older woman.

e. Encouraging reflection

All of the actions described above contributed to encouraging staff to reflect on their work and the development of the Centre. However, there were also a number of other ways through which I attempted to encourage reflection. Like Bloor (1997), I think that reflection on every day practice can be a means of social change, and that where researchers encourage modification of practice, they can help to address social problems.

One way of encouraging reflection was through a habit of sharing reading material with others. It seemed to me that as a researcher I had time and resources available for gathering thought-provoking material, and so I could make that available to others who might be interested. As I came across interesting things, or as others asked me for information on issues, I provided material for others to read, and often received comments about how good it was to have someone accessing useful resources and sharing them. As an academic I also knew about courses which were available, and was able therefore to share information which encouraged others to take up study. Te Aopehirangi, for example, after hearing about the Diploma in Te Whiuwhiu o te Hau - Maori counselling, which was available locally, enrolled in the course, and her learning was then significant in the development of Maori counselling practices in the Centre.

I also tried to enable staff members to attend conferences or gatherings they would not otherwise have been able to attend, and at which they would both hear information and discussion and meet others doing similar work. Near the beginning of the inquiry Karen and I received funding from the Department of Internal Affairs to attend a research seminar in Wellington by Dr Rajesh Tandon on civil society and participatory research. This seminar fed our conversations about the community sector, governance and the development of the action inquiry in the Agency.

Early in the inquiry I asked Karen if she would be interested in attending with me the 'Emerging Approaches to Inquiry' workshop in Stroud, England in

September 2000, run by Judi Marshall and Peter Reason from the Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice, at the University of Bath. This workshop was described as experiential and as offering opportunities to explore with the support of others, our own action inquiry and the practice of contributing to radical social change through the organisations we are involved in. The initial notice referred to Meyerson and Scully's (1995) notion of 'tempered radicalism', for example. The topic and process was very appealing to both Karen and I, so we committed to trying to find funding for both of us to attend, viewing the travel and workshop as an opportunity to develop the action inquiry together. The University of Waikato funded me as a lecturer to attend, and I was able to secure funding for Karen (at the 11th hour) from the discretionary Lotteries Fund of the Minister of Internal Affairs.

With great excitement we set out for a week in England, with long stretches of talking time and few distractions on the flights from one side of the world to another. The workshop itself, the people we met there, and the support of the small group who worked with us on developing our inquiry, impacted on us both in many ways. They provided the source of much spiritual and intellectual reflection and an amazing opportunity to develop the inquiry through the growing friendship between Karen and I, as is discussed further in Chapter 9.

In October/November 2000 several staff and I attended the conference "Children's Needs, Rights and Welfare", at the University of Waikato. The conference had been organised to provide a place for debate about the Agenda for Children which the government was proposing. Attending the conference was a marker of a growing awareness of complex issues in the work of the Centre around the care and protection of children. One of the Agency counsellors commented after attending the conference: o*ne thing about coming to a conference like this is that it makes you passionate and committed again about what you do.*

A number of workshops affected my thinking significantly, as is described further in Chapter 9. They also contributed to the conversations Karen and I, and

some other staff members were having about the difficulties of the principle of the paramount safety of the child and the application of the discourse of the rights of children, as is discussed in Chapter 10.

I also encouraged staff to talk with people in other agencies around the country who were doing similar work. In two cases, this developed into visits to other agencies. All of the staff of the Centre visited St Mary's Family Centre in Auckland, where we talked at length with the staff running a residential programme for women and their children. Witnessing the focus of this agency on using psychological assessment and expertise as the basis for their close interventions was significant in later conversations about the power of psychological discourses in social service work, as is discussed in Chapter 10. Staff of the Agency also visited Higher Ground, in Auckland, a drug and alcohol addiction residential service. The visit marked a growing awareness of the issues many of the women in the Centre faced in regard to drug and alcohol addictions.

f. Taking the ideas beyond the Agency

The inquiry included finding ways to take the ideas we were discussing beyond the conversations within the Agency itself. This was a way of both sharing ideas and verifying issues. It was also a way of ensuring that Karen in particular became part of wider conversations. One way to do this was to present our work publicly as conference papers. For example, Karen and I presented a paper titled "Justice through service: an action inquiry" (Gatenby & Hume, 2001) at the International Association for Community Development Conference in Rotorua. In the discussion following this paper we were able to raise some of the difficult issues we were encountering regarding the care and protection of children. That these were significant issues was confirmed by a number of Maori women in the audience. We were also invited to give a keynote presentation (Gatenby & Hume, 2002) after the inquiry had formally ended at the Australia New Zealand Third Sector Research Conference in Auckland in late 2002.

We were also invited to give a number of other presentations. For example, we spoke in the Godtalk series of seminars at the Anglican Cathedral in the City.

This was a series of seminars drawing together church and city and was another place where we were given valuable feedback about our work, particularly in this case, in regard to mental health discourses. Several other agencies and church based groups, such as Methodist Mission Northern and the Anglican-Methodist Community Project in Auckland, also asked to visit Te Ara Hou and Cross Rose Centre, as both were seen as innovative developments in social service. Karen would often ask me to meet and speak with these groups with her and our conversations with these groups extended both their and our thinking.

Karen continues to be asked to speak to groups of people and has commented recently that she often draws on the action inquiry, particularly the notion of discourses, in her presentations, asking others to think about dominant discourses and places of resistance. Karen's involvement in conversations happening at the national level increased as she also became involved in the work of the Social Justice Commission of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand, including discussions between Commission members and the Prime Minister, Helen Clark.

Part of the increasingly activist focus of the Agency emerged as several smaller projects through which staff and others in the Agency were able to advocate for wider policy changes. Other researchers were drawn to the Agency, including a theological college student who completed a research project regarding banking services for beneficiaries. I was also able to take part in another small research project on behalf of the Agency regarding the funding of community based services.

Perhaps the most significant of these smaller activist research projects was the development of a submission to the Ministry of Justice regarding the laws about the care and custody of children when parents part. In late 2000 one of the counsellors at the Agency brought in a copy of an advertisement in the local newspaper asking for submissions to the Ministry of Justice which was reviewing the legal frame work surrounding guardianship, access and custody to children and young people. He suggested to Karen that the Agency make a submission after discussion at a staff meeting. At the staff meeting it was agreed

that further discussion was needed and I was asked to facilitate that discussion and the writing of a submission. The suggestion to write a submission was talked about as part of the Agency's wish to be involved at a policy level and part of its social justice intent, and because custody and access to children had become a central issue for many of the women who were living in the Centre.

As part of that facilitation I suggested that we widen the discussion in two ways: first, to interested staff in all of the agencies at Te Ara Hou, all of whom worked with children and families, and second, to the women who lived in the Centre who had faced or were facing many of these very issues (as indeed had a number of the staff). Two meetings of staff were subsequently held and three staff asked to talk with me individually also. I drafted the submission and the draft was circulated to all staff and to the chairwoman of the Trust Board (a seasoned submission writer), and revisions were subsequently made. The final submission is shown in Appendix 6.

To involve the women in the Centre Karen and I first discussed an appropriate process, since these issues were so significant and current for a number of the women. A process was needed which both protected their anonymity and gave them a voice at a level where they would not otherwise have had a voice. At the daily morning gathering of women in the Centre I described the review which was occurring, gave out copies of the discussion paper for those who were interested and said that I would very much like to talk with them about the issues, if they would like to talk with me, and that their comments could be incorporated in a submission, or they might like to write their own submissions and I could support them in that if that would be helpful.

I also clarified issues of confidentiality by saying that if anybody wished to talk with me individually, I would like to either take notes or tape record our conversations. Nobody else, but me, would have access to those notes or tapes. Then, once the submission was written, they would be returned to the woman concerned. I would seek their permission for any comments I chose to use, and individuals would not in any way be identified in the submission. They could at

any time choose to withdraw or to say they did not want their comments to be used. I would give them a copy of the draft submission and they would be able to make further comments and suggestions.

There was much immediate discussion; this was an issue many felt strongly about, with good reason. Five women asked to see me individually, and with one exception agreed to me taping our conversation. We spoke at length of their experiences of the law and many of the stories I heard were harrowing. They informed the submission significantly though much of the material could not be used directly. They also added to my puzzling about the principle of the paramountcy of child safety, and to the decision to attend, with others, the conference "Children's Welfare: Rights and Responsibilities", which was timed for just after submissions to the Review closed.

Drafting the submission was a somewhat unsatisfying experience as I tried to draw together in a convincing, succinct and moving way, the variety of stories and discussions I had heard or been part of. Staff did make significant comments on the draft and several further discussions occurred in tea breaks or other informal times. Two of the women in the Centre also commented on the draft, indicating that they were really moved by the inclusion of their voices in the submission and adding further comments they wished to be included.

3. Weaving the method through the life of the Agency and the emerging themes

In Chapter 10 I discuss a number of themes which emerged through this inquiry, particularly related to the construction of the women in the Centre, their subjectivity and the related subjectivity of the staff, and the positioning of the Agency. These themes emerged in a way completely interwoven through the emergent methods and actions. Here is one example to illustrate that interweaving of method, actions, inquiry and theme, and the continual movement between first, second and third person inquiry. The example also illustrates the six aspects of the emergent method previously described in this chapter.

The particular series of events and conversations I describe here is related to the construction of women in the Centre as dangerous or safe, as bad or good mothers. It was sparked by an event in the Centre where a mother had physically injured her child while disciplining him. At the next staff meeting, a counsellor in the Agency recounted the story and expressed her concern that the woman was not a safe mother and should not have the care of her children. Her position sparked some intense and difficult talk. The Coordinator of the Centre, Donna, expressed her concern that one or two other staff members never saw the women as good mothers and indeed disliked the women. The debate shifted to issues around the responsibility of the Agency to the children, to the women, to the government department funding the work, and to the statutory obligations of care and protection work. The talk circled angrily for some time while I listened carefully. I then chose to intervene by quietly articulating the two positions fundamental to the argument. I reminded staff of things we had talked about in both the workshop on discourses and the workshop on the construction of gender. I talked about the difficulties in creating dichotomies and the possibilities when we use 'both...and....' rather than 'either...or...'. Between us we were able to articulate the risks of constructing the women as only dangerous or bad mothers, and the risks of constructing the women as only safe or good mothers.

Over the next few days, several people sought me out to discuss further these complex issues about how we frame, create and maintain each other. Donna and I had a long conversation about what it meant to believe that the women were and could be safe and loving mothers, in the face of sometimes difficult outcomes. She articulated a clear position of belief in the women's ability and potential, a position which she believed was necessary to working in a Centre which claimed to be about social justice and transformation. Interwoven in our conversation were Donna's stories of her own childhood and loving parents who might have been constructed as dangerous by others. For Donna, disliking the women was akin to disliking her.

Karen and I, and Karen with others, including sometimes the women in the Centre, had a number of conversations about the Agency's practices in reporting care and protection incidents to Child, Youth and Family Services. The movement in practice in the Agency was towards finding ways which kept both mother and child safe, acknowledged statutory obligations, and still found ways to work with the women to move beyond physical harm. Sometimes this meant, for example, reporting an incident and at the same time communicating a plan to ensure safety so that the mother was still able to care for her child or children.

The themes around the construction of mothers and the safety of children continued to arise in staff meetings, workshops and conversations. In the series of conversations described here, my role as action inquirer included articulating various 'knowledges' and subject positions, encouraging others to elaborate on these further and to reflect on their own positioning and subjectivity in relation to them. The workshops and staff meetings as places of group discussion, raising of issues, and learning, often provided springboards, sometimes through fierce debate or deep concern, for a range of conversations within other relationships. As themes emerged I also tended to seek out academic writing related to them and sometimes I would share this writing with others in the Agency. For example, the conversations described above led me to search out writing about the construction of mothers, the safety of children and social work. As is discussed further in the next chapter, thinking about the care of children in the Centre became deeply interwoven with reflexivity about some of the most significant events in my own life. Themes were woven through a range of group and relational settings, with continual movement among the various aspects of the method described earlier. Action inquiry in this setting, emerged as part of the life of the Agency rather than as a project which happened to a set timetable.

There were many such examples like the one described here, which I could have used to illustrate the weaving of method and theme to create the inquiry. However, many of the particular stories or incidents experienced in the Agency could not be written in to this thesis, for several reasons. Sometimes the risks for women in the Centre, staff members and the Agency were too great, particularly

as they related to issues of the care and protection of children. Karen and I also discussed the ethics of recording permanently in writing some of the stories of difficult incidents or about difficult and painful events in women's lives, in the context of an environment seeking to provide transformation. Fixing women's stories in text was something we could not do lightly. Many stories were also not mine to tell, indeed they were often deeply personal to the women and staff members involved. The profoundly personal nature of many of the stories provided deeply embedded subject positions though which women came to their own knowledge or 'truths'. To illustrate the embeddedness of 'who we are' with 'what we know', I articulate reflexively some of my own stories in the next chapter, as they related to things I came to 'know' through this inquiry.

4. Drawing the inquiry to a close

Early on in the doctoral process, one of my supervisors asked how I would know when the research had ended and how I would deal ethically with ending the committed relationships intended with the people in the Agency and the women in the Centre. I responded then that my relationships with the people there would not end because the doctorate was complete, but that I had committed myself to a long term involvement with this place and these people. The doctoral study was integral to that involvement for some of that time.

Nevertheless, I still needed to judge at what point I would end the formally constituted action inquiry by 'completing the research' and handing in this thesis. Towards the end of 2001 a number of changes occurred in the Agency and the Centre which drew to a close the initial period of development and which provided an appropriate ending for the inquiry described here. The Agency had been re-named as Anglican Action and the vision and mission had been re-articulated. Several staff had left and new ones were appointed with some restructuring of positions. It became clear to staff that the Centre would operate most successfully with fewer women and children in residence, so one wing of the building was closed and then became the offices of staff. So there was a physical shift of the Agency also. At the same time my own life was changing

and there was plenty I wanted to write and think about through completing this thesis.

There had also been numerous examples in everyday conversations that indicated that the notion of 'inquiry' was embedded in the culture of the Agency and did not depend on my presence. It was written into the mission of the Agency, was a regular part of meetings and special occasions, and was evident in everyday talk about the work.

There were several particular events through which I marked the process of ending the research. Karen and I chose to spend a full day together in retreat, reflecting on the inquiry. We taped our conversation over that day. I also chose to present separate reports to the Board and to staff, as are shown in Appendix 7. The report to the Board was given over a morning as part of a day in which the Board was thinking about the vision and work of the Agency. The discussion during that morning was sometimes difficult. I realised that most members of the Board had not been involved closely in the inquiry and that some of the ideas Karen and I were expressing were surprising and challenging. These tensions led us to further reflections on the increasing emphasis on governance in the community sector and the power relations between staff members and Board members in community organisations.

The report to the staff included my asking questions about the effects of the inquiry on the work of the Agency. This report and discussion were taped. I began the report with the poem shown in Appendix 7 and then talked about what I thought the inquiry had been about, the commitments we had discussed at the start of the inquiry, what the process had been and what had emerged through it. I then asked what the research had meant for them. During the conversation that followed Te Aopehirangi sang a waiata[30] to me, in recognition of all that had happened during the inquiry. A number of people commented on having learnt a lot, particularly in regard to the Treaty of Waitangi and the community sector.

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[30] A waiata is a Maori song acknowledging and honouring a speaker and the speaker's words or the topic being discussed.

There were comments about there being many wonderful conversations, and indications that those conversations had changed practices in the Agency. Some people commented on the long conversations they had seen between Karen and me, the passion for social change they saw in both of us, and the possibility for research to contribute to leadership for social change.

> *I was conscious of the long conversations you had with Karen...*
>
> *...the sort of exciting stimulating conversations we're having all the time...*

Karen commented on the value of research in making more publicly available the kind of learning and thinking that happens through the daily work of the Agency:

> *I still think it's really important to have, to continually be equipped as a group of people to do some good in our world, and to relate what we are doing to how it relates to some wider knowledge in our society and to keep ourselves updated and to continue to be those theorists, because you know some of the best theory making could be going on here, it is going on, absolutely, and how we might contribute to the wider thinking. It's vital.*

There were also many comments about me – just as there had been several times when I had asked for feedback on how the research was going and how we might change it. Participants seemed to take my requests for input as an opportunity to compliment me and to say how much they valued my involvement, so that sometimes it was hard to get any other comments. I have taken this tendency as an indication of the centrality of the researcher him or herself to the inquiry. This is implied in the following comment which also relates to the action inquiry framework:

> *If you didn't turn up everybody was going I wonder where Bev was today, so you actually became part of the team and how you said at the*

beginning it was the doing, not just writing, I actually think that must give you far better results...

So, my formal doctoral time in the Agency ended in March 2002, though in many ways the inquiry has continued to be part of my life both through relationships which endure and through a new professional role in the community sector I moved into. I also hear about the ways the inquiry continues as part of the daily life of the Agency through staff who have been changed by it, practices which have changed, and an ongoing commitment to inquiry.

Table 1: Chronology of research events and activities

Date	Description
Prior to enrolment in doctorate	
Late-1999	Karen describes proposals for Te Ara Hou and the Centre at a Sunday service at St Francis Cooperating parish.
	I am contracted to write a proposal for research funding from the Health Research Council for a group of women, including staff from Health and Nursing Studies at Waikato Institute of Technology (the local polytechnic), the University of Waikato, Karen and Wendy, to conduct research with the women who would live in the proposed Centre.
	I discuss with Karen the possibility of contributing to the work of the Centre as a researcher enrolled in a doctorate, and we agree to explore the possibilities further.
	I attend a hui (meeting) at Kirikiriroa Marae, seeking involvement by Maori in the work of the Centre.
Jan 2000	I take part as a participant in a strategic planning and visioning exercise for Te Ara Hou, alongside others identified as 'stakeholders' in the proposals.
Feb-July 2000	I supervise a group of community nursing students from Waikato Institute of Technology completing a community research project with the first group of women who live at the Centre.
March 2000	I attend the formal opening and blessing of Te Ara Hou
July 2000: enrolment in doctorate	
July-Nov 2000	I teach University of Waikato course in Managing Not-for-profit Organisations. Karen gives a guest lecture in the course in July.
July-Dec 2000	I spend Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays at the Agency and the Centre, including participating in Wednesday staff meetings each week for: 1. all Agency staff and 2. staff involved in the Centre.
Aug 2000	Karen and I attend a seminar in Wellington by Professor Rajesh Tandon, on participatory research and civil society. We are funded by the Department of Internal Affairs to attend the seminar offered as part of a national forum and series of seminars on Research in the Voluntary Sector.
	Karen and I meet with Stephanie McIntyre, Social Justice Commissioner for the Anglican Church nationally, and based in Wellington.
Sept-Nov 2000	I facilitate a series of discussions, interview a number of women and staff associated with the Centre, and then write up a submission to the Justice Commission reviewing the laws about guardianship, custody and access to children and young people in New Zealand.
Sept 2000	Karen and I attend 'Emerging approaches to inquiry', Stroud, England. I work to find funding for Karen to attend, and she receives an award from the Minister of Internal Affairs.

Oct 2000 - mid 2001	I participate with two other women in a feminist theology reading group.
Nov 2000	I arrange and participate in a visit by the Centre staff to St Mary's Family Centre in Auckland.
Nov 2000	I participate in a research study on funding of non-governmental organisations, on behalf of the Agency.
Nov 2000	I facilitate a workshop for staff on marae protocol and tikanga, in preparation for a powhiri (welcoming ceremony) to welcome the new Cross Rose Centre Coordinator, Donna.
Nov - Dec 2000	Three staff (Karen, Donna, and one counsellor) and I attend the conference 'Children's Needs, Rights and Welfare' at the University of Waikato, Aotearoa New Zealand.
Dec 2000	Karen and I facilitate a workshop for Board members and staff on 'action inquiry' as a way of working and report on our trip to Stroud.
Jan-Dec 2001	I spend Wednesdays at the Agency throughout the year, attending the weekly staff meetings for all staff and staff of the Centre.
Feb 2001	An informal review of the Centre takes place.
Mar 2001	A staff retreat is held at Raglan for a day.
April 2001	Karen and I attend the International Association for Community Development Conference in Rotorua, Aotearoa New Zealand, and present a paper on Te Ara Hou, the Centre and the action inquiry. We are awarded scholarships by the Department of Internal Affairs for our conference fees.
April 2001	Staff visit Higher Ground in Auckland, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre.
May 2001	I facilitate a discussion involving Agency staff and staff of Te Whanau Putahi, a church-based social service in another part of the city, about the Agenda for Children proposed by government.
June 2001	Karen and I attend a seminar by Professor Brueggeman, an internationally respected Old Testament theologian, at St Peter's Cathedral, Hamilton.
June 2001	I facilitate a workshop for staff on discourses.
June 2001	Karen and I describe the work of Te Ara Hou, the Centre and the action inquiry to a group of staff and trustees from the Anglican/Methodist Community Project in Auckland who had asked to visit the Agency.
July 2001	Karen and I attend seminars in Hamilton by Dr John Spong, an internationally acclaimed theologian.
July 2001	Karen, I and other staff discuss and revise new articulations of the vision, mission and protocols for the work of the Agency. Karen presents these to staff in a kete (woven flax bag) as a gift.
Aug 2001	Karen and I present information about Te Ara Hou, the Centre and the action inquiry to a group of staff and trustees from Methodist Mission Northern, who had requested a visit.
Sept 2001	The kaiawhina (Maori woman providing support and care) from the Centre facilitates a workshop for staff on the Treaty of Waitangi.

Oct 2001	I facilitate a workshop on 'empowering women' for women staff of the Agency and Link House, a single parent agency in another part of the city.
Nov 2001	Karen and I make a presentation on the action inquiry in the Godtalk series of monthly seminars organised by leaders from the Anglican Cathedral. (Earlier speakers have included Jane Kelsey, Maria Humphries and Charles Waldegrave.)
Nov 2001	I facilitate a workshop for staff on the Treaty of Waitangi in relation to the work of the Agency.
Nov 2001	I facilitate a workshop for staff on changes in the community sector and in social services over the last decade and a half.
Drawing the research to a close	
Nov 2001	Karen and I spend a day together on retreat, reflecting on the action inquiry.
Dec 2001	I present a report on the action inquiry and workshop on the community sector to Board members.
Feb 2002	I present a report on the action inquiry to staff members and facilitate reflection on the inquiry.
March 2002	Waikato Anglican Social Services is renamed Anglican Action. I attend the launch of the new name.
After my formal doctoral time	
Nov 2002	Karen and I give a keynote presentation on the action inquiry at the Australia New Zealand Society for Third Sector Research conference in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand.
April 2003	Karen and I prepare a joint paper for the 'Connecting research, policy and practice conference', in Wellington, 29-30 April, which I present.

Table 2: Summary of research events and processes

Purpose	Means	Notes and examples
i. Living the research as my own inquiry	a. Reading and writing b. Thinking about my own subjectivity c. Spiritual practice	This happened through developing habits of reflection and challenge, such as keeping a diary, academic work, and joining a feminist theology reading group. Prayer was also a part of this inquiry.
ii. Making the research and me part of daily life in the Agency	a. Involving myself in the Agency by being there 3 days a week. b. Participating in weekly staff meetings. c. Facilitating staff retreats. d. Meeting with the Board e. Facilitating the writing of a submission to the justice commission on the laws covering guardianship, custody and access for children	a. This meant being available to talk often, knowing the work of the Agency, and getting to know people well. b. Often I used provocative questions to encourage discussion in staff meetings. c. eg. retreat at Raglan. d. I sought permission from the Board for the research and provided research updates. e. This involved gathering stories from both staff and residents of Cross Rose Centre and using them to form the basis of the submission.
iii. Working with ideas through conversation and relationship	a. Interviews with staff (taped) b. Conversations c. Stories	Most of the interviews were with Karen. We tended to tape our conversations when it seemed we were exploring something significant. I was available to staff who wished to talk over issues or their work.
iv. Teaching/learning and discussing	A series of workshops I facilitated: a. action inquiry b. discourses c. changes in the community sector d. working biculturally e. empowering women	The workshops were attended by staff and sometimes by Board members. In the case of the workshop on "working biculturally", a staff member also provided a workshop on the Treaty of Waitangi.
v. Encouraging reflection	a. Sharing readings b. Encouraging and enabling staff to attend conferences c. Arranging visits to other agencies	a. A wide range of material was provided for staff when they indicated an interest in a topic. b. Karen and I attended the University of Bath workshop in Stroud in September 2000. I and a group of staff attended a conference on 'Children's needs, rights and welfare' at the University of Waikato, October, 2000 c. eg. A group of staff visited St Mary's Family Centre, Auckland
vi. Taking the ideas beyond the Agency	a. Presenting conference papers b. Invited presentations c. Visits to the Agency by other groups	a. eg. Karen and I gave a paper at the International Association for Community Development Conference, Rotorua 2001 b. eg. Karen and I spoke in the Godtalk series in Hamilton c. eg. A group of staff from the Methodist Mission Northern visited.

Chapter 9

First, second and third person inquiry: subjectivity and reflexivity

A. Introduction

In this chapter I provide a reflexive account of the inquiry, using the concepts of first, second and third person research, subjectivity and positioning. In the spirit of poststructural reflexivity discussed in Chapter 2, I examine my subjectivity in the inquiry and the ways it was related to the subjectivity of others. In particular I articulate some of the complex ways in which my positions as an academic, an action researcher, a woman, a Pakeha, a Christian, a mother, and a mother who has had a baby die, provided particular insights into the discourses framing, instantiating and impinging on the lives of some women and children in Aotearoa New Zealand. I reflect on my own subjectivities as they intersect with and substantiate the critiques and resistances that emerged within the research.

I also use this examination to reflect on the connections between reflexivity as it is evoked in first person action research practices and the poststructural notion of subjectivity. Being able to account for my research with this kind of reflexivity is possible because of frameworks for examining who we are and what we know constructed within both action research and poststructural theory.

B. Revealing subjectivities

As discussed in Chapter 4, first person research practice is close to the approaches described as mindful inquiry (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998) and living life as inquiry (Marshall, 1999, 2001). It includes the researcher's inquiring into his or her own life, and the researcher's awareness of self and of his or her actions in the world.

In this section I use my own first person action inquiry as a reflexive account of the subject positions available, contested and claimed in the action inquiry. I am reminded by Jones (1992) that writing as the subject is not to write as one authoritative voice, but to write as a woman located politically by my own particular cultural, ethnic, social and economic contexts, and constituted as multiple, fragmentary and partial.

This account of my subjectivity provides a beginning point from which I also examine the second person research which emerged through relationships in the inquiry, and point out the theoretical issues which emerged in the third person research, precisely because those issues became significant in both the first and second person research. As Reinharz points out, the brought and created selves of researchers "are those that are relevant to the people...they shape or obstruct the relationships that the researcher can form and hence the knowledge that can be obtained" (1997, p.4). Second person research practice is described as including all of the inquiring we do with others about issues that mutually concern us, through dialogue and the establishment of communities of inquiry (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Third person research is described as extending first and second person research to political events, by widening the possibilities for who may also know through the research. Written reports of the process and outcome of action research are one form of third person research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001a). I had planned to write this account separating first, second and third person inquiry. But, in interweaving reflexivity and subjectivity through each, it became impossible to separate the three.

Although there are other ways I could choose to reflexively explore and present the complex subjectivities in this research, I have chosen to do it largely within the current politics of identity in this country. Thus I label myself in this chapter in a number of ways, using categories made available through a number of discourses operating at this time in this place. To do so is not meant to imply that these categories represent any essential truth, but to acknowledge the current veracity of the majority of the categories in research accounts of this type. In another time, a reflexive account of researcher subjectivity (if it were still even a potential object of research) might be presented under a whole different set of headings.

Ristock and Pennell (1996) suggest that reflexivity as a researcher needs to go beyond simply listing the social and identity groups we belong to. The particular politics of identity now, in my country, mean that I reflect as a middle-class woman, as Pakeha, as academic. I also choose to reflect as Christian, as mother, as mother whose baby died, as action researcher, as doctoral student, and as feminist. Some of these subject positions arise out of very powerful discourses, while others do not. I acknowledge that all of these categories intersect, collude, collaborate with, and contradict each other in complex ways, and have chosen to group them in ways that seem related but which are always less complex than I experience them. Like Ronai, I experience and argue for 'self' as a "process in constant state of transformation and flux...the dialogue between the facets" (1992, p.115).

1. Some further comments on initiating the inquiry

I want to add some comments to the description in the previous chapter of the early stages of seeking involvement in the Agency as a researcher, for two reasons. First, the time of initiating the research seems to me to be a particularly significant time in the emergence of the inquiry. Second, the reasons and ways I sought involvement provide an example of the various subject positions I occupied and out of which other significant relationships in the inquiry were formed.

I was interested in contributing to the development of the Centre for several reasons. Karen had publicly stated her interest in social justice and I was committed to social justice too. The Agency was receiving public funding to work with women and children often labelled as oppressed. Karen and Wendy had expressed their wish to work appropriately with Maori women and children. I had spent some years thinking about women's lives and the somewhat tricky notion of 'empowering women', bicultural development, organisations, communication, grief, and research for social change, and I thought those years of thinking might be useful to this organisation. My positioning as an academic interested in similar ideas and social transformation provided one position from which to seek involvement in the Agency.

There were also committed Christians involved using Christianity as their position for social justice work and I was looking for ways of being a social scientist, feminist and

Christian woman, with all of the complexities that entails. I was attracted to the Christian ethos of social justice, the Christian ethic of care for people who are suffering, and the possibility of spiritual exploration. My own background in Christianity had been primarily within the Anglican church so much of the particular flavour of the Christian discourse resonated with a form of Christianity I was familiar with and I valued the commitments of the Anglican church to working in ways appropriate for both Maori and Pacific Island peoples in our country.

I also knew and liked a number of the staff, and enjoyed intelligent and thoughtful conversations with them. Some of my feminist friends were also involved in thinking about research in the Centre. I had some painful things in my own life which had led me to working in places where pain is acknowledged and the Agency seemed like such a place.

I also wanted to complete a doctorate. I had been considering enrolling in a doctorate for some years. That I had held a university lectureship for a number of years without a doctorate was increasingly unusual. (That is part of another long story about my positioning as a university lecturer and mother, who had 4 children over those years, and who was a grieving mother after the death of one of those children.) For me, there was considerable emotion around doing a doctorate, finding funding to enable me to do it, and doing a doctorate which felt like something rich with possibility. The mutuality I felt with the purpose of the Centre for empowering women and their children and the kinds of social justice talk by Karen provided for me the sense of a doctorate which fitted with commitments I had already made. It was a place where it felt safe to be a student again, and where my doctoral work would enable me both to explore issues I saw as significant in my sense of myself/selves, and at the same time, contribute to work for others which could make a difference in their lives.

All of these things came together when I approached Karen to ask if I might do doctoral research with the Agency, particularly something to do with Cross Rose Centre. At the meeting with Karen at which I asked if I might do research in the Agency, I presented myself in a number of ways, as a feminist researcher interested in women's lives, as a researcher interested in participatory and action research, as a woman committed to social justice, as a Christian woman, as a mother who had had a

baby die who had chosen to do research with bereaved parents and written a book out of that research (Gatenby, 1998), and as a person involved in the not-for-profit sector, through the National Association for Loss and Grief NZ, an organisation providing support for those who are grieving.

At the first staff meeting I attended, I did not introduce myself so broadly. I chose to introduce myself as a person interested in doing research with people, not on people, as interested in participating with them to ask questions about what their mission statement of *justice through service* meant for them and the ways they worked. They listened but said little. The Director had already approved my being there. Hart and Bond (1995) suggest that gaining the approval and patronage of key gatekeepers to an organisation may in itself work against collaboration and may entail the inclusion of a managerialist agenda. Although Karen was clear in a number of staff forums about her desire to challenge managerialism and to work in participative and inclusive ways with all staff, my friendship with Karen often influenced how others participated in the inquiry. The organisation was also small enough however, that forming relationships with all of the staff was possible, though of course those relationships varied significantly.

Karen also took me to visit Bishop David Moxon. I spoke more broadly with him, and gave him copies of some of my past writing since I knew something of his academic background. At a Board meeting where I was invited to speak about the research, I spoke about my commitments to participative research with a social justice intent. I invoked the language of action research self-consciously in these conversations to position myself differently to the traditional expert researcher doing research on people. I invoked action research with its liberatory intent, as an appropriate parallel for an agency interested in social justice. I was also introduced, however, by another Board member I had known for some time, as a lecturer in management with an interest in empowering women.

2. On being an academic, lecturer, doctoral student and action researcher

My background is academic in a number of ways. From 1988-1996, I was a university lecturer teaching and researching organisational communication, women

and management, gender and communication, and intercultural communication. Since leaving that employment, I had worked part time on a number of projects, including several academic projects as both researcher and writer. I had continued to teach at the university on a contractual basis.

My thinking as an academic had included feminist theory, poststructural theory and action research. My academic work and commitments had always been around the possibility of transformation and social justice, and more recently included a critique of the discourse of managerialism and its import into the community sector. I came into the inquiry with those years of thinking, as is reflected in Chapters 2-6.

During the first 6 months of the inquiry I was teaching a course on managing not-for-profit organisations, and the reading I was doing in that, the explorations with students, and the involvement of a number of people from the community sector in our city, including Karen, as guest speakers in the course, all influenced my thinking, and the ways I was positioned by others. As a university lecturer within a management school I was positioned as a certain kind of expert.

Some people in the Agency, (usually men, but not all men) positioned me as expert management academic, interested in evaluating the work of the Agency with the implicit purpose of uncovering any inefficiencies in its management. I think they were shocked by some of the things I said as the research went on, particularly about managerialism. My questioning of the truth and morality of effective and efficient management, combined with my refusal to act as a certain kind of academic expert bringing in certain kinds of theories about being effective managers and applying them to their practice, challenged the prime position from which they saw themselves as central to the work of this social service. Participation in the name of action research became a complex issue in these relationships. By challenging the discourse within which some staff situated themselves in that setting I was challenging the very way in which they saw themselves.

The sometimes tense relationships which developed provided a challenge out of which my understanding grew of the operations and power of management discourse in the community and social services sector in our country. It was nigh impossible to

have a conversation with some people occupying certain subject positions (such as financial governance) about the power of managerialism, why resistance to it might be important and any possible alternatives. As an action researcher I wanted to position those people as co-researchers, participating with me in thinking critically about managerialism within the social services community sector in our country. Some would not be positioned in that way.

'Being an academic', meant I was positioned in complex ways as both insider and outsider, and perhaps what I call 'other sider'. Naples (1997) suggests that we move beyond the dichotomy of insider/outsider, to examine the shifting and permeable locations differently experienced by both the researcher and other participants. I was both insider, friend, helper, and colleague, with an Agency name badge (*Bev Gatenby* on the top line) and outsider or other sider (*Researcher* underneath) with a bunch of theories that might be useful, but which were primarily inside my head. Being 'a student' made me more approachable because I was positioned as a learner, sometimes alongside others in the Agency who were completing tertiary qualifications. As a student with a scholarship, my contribution to the agency did not cost any money, so I was occasionally called a 'volunteer' in the sector, and viewed as generously giving of myself.

As a researcher working with the staff of the Centre I was one of the staff, and not one of the residents of the Centre. However, that I was a researcher and therefore at the same time not one of the staff meant I could talk with the women who lived in the Centre in non-staff ways, and I was often spoken of within the Centre as a person who was interested in their stories and who was a story teller. This position became available to me particularly when I wrote the submission on behalf of the Agency to the Justice Commission called to review the laws regarding guardianship, custody, and access to children when parents separate. The women in the Centre were very keen to tell me their stories and for me to write something on their behalf. They directed me to put my writing skills to use, to find a way for their voices to be heard. They wanted to be taped and to be quoted anonymously in the submission, to be heard, because they felt passionately that they had been unjustly treated by the law and its officers. The submission itself had begun as being on behalf of the Agency, not on behalf of the women in the Centre, and the power of their voices and stories

threw into relief the boundary place I occupied sometimes, as a researcher with a group of staff working with a group of women. Always power was at play, and I was constantly aware of ways it intersected with the positions available to me. I worried about the authorial control I had over the submission.

I was also aware that the research was planned to be the means of my completing a doctorate. Often I wished others who participated in the inquiry could receive the same qualification with me. Some writers, such as Hart and Bond (1995), caution against the use of action research for gaining academic qualifications, because of the potential for the need to complete the qualification to work against the best interests of stakeholders in the research. However there are ways in which being a doctoral student authorised a position which was different to other sponsored research positions in which the expectations of those paying for the research create different power relations. Being awarded a university scholarship to complete a doctorate separated my income from my role in the Agency. It also seemed to me a certain justice that some of the resources of the university, a wealthy institution, should be available through me to a small not-for-profit organisation. I was also clear that my commitment to the Agency and the Centre was longer term than the doctoral study. I also believed that the key signifier of the validity of this research would be what had been achieved for the Centre. Validity is discussed further in Chapter 12.

As noted earlier, in the early months of the inquiry I was often called a storyteller, there to collect stories, tell stories and make sense of stories. My own forays into narrative analysis as an academic made me comfortable with being a storyteller. Although stories still played a significant role in the inquiry, as is described in Chapter 8, as the research evolved the title researcher became more common and more comfortable for me. I sometimes felt constrained by being a storyteller, since sometimes the position did not allow me to speak in academic ways when I wanted to. As the workshops developed I had also added more firmly the position of teacher. I am aware that in doing so I was sometimes seeking a position from which I could exercise more power in affecting the work of the Agency.

As an academic, I chose to try to make opportunities for learning that I had experienced available to others. So an important part of the research process became

encouraging staff to have opportunities for learning and reflection, including finding appropriate conferences and encouraging staff to attend (and sometimes finding necessary funding for them to participate), sharing readings and being available for theoretical conversations. While I acknowledge the privilege of academic life and the ways it has been difficult in my own life, I have also experienced my own academic learning as sometimes liberating. I believed that providing academic opportunities for others could provide subject positions for staff that would not otherwise be available to them, and that that was a space for reflexivity about the work of the Agency.

3. As Pakeha researcher

Given my feminist thinking around the politics of identity, including the intersections of ethnicity and gender, I was always aware of my position as a Pakeha woman in the Agency and in relation to the women in the Centre, most of whom were Maori. Indeed I chose to work with staff because they were almost all Pakeha and exercised considerable power in relation to the women in the Centre. I was concerned about the potential for both institutional and personal racism in the work of the Agency. This concern was sometimes at odds with ideals of participation in action research, in which participation is supposed to minimise power differences or avoid the exercise of power. As I became more outspoken about the need for staff to consider the ways they might exercise power in their relationships with Maori women in the Centre, or with other staff who were Maori, some staff resisted the surveillance they felt came from me. Others sought me out to tell me how much they appreciated my stand, because it enabled them to take a similar stand. Donna, the second Coordinator of the Centre and a Maori woman, sought me out for conversations as she articulated specific instances of the exercise of the power of Pakeha women to know Maori women. Te Aopehirangi's gift of waiata during my final report to staff, was a gift steeped in Maori tradition, from a Maori woman to a Pakeha woman, honouring our work and acknowledging our shared herstory in the Agency.

In our country, a common response to the politics of working with the Treaty of Waitangi has been to challenge Pakeha to work with Pakeha around their racism, and in so doing, to hold open a space for justice for Maori (Consedine & Consedine,

2001). I chose to work from this perspective as an action researcher. It was a perspective which opened some conversations and closed others. Being Pakeha and a researcher meant I could sometimes ask a difficult question which it was less safe for others to ask. At the time of looking for a new Coordinator for the Centre, I was able to ask if the Coordinator should be a Maori woman, to facilitate discussion around this and to suggest ways of ensuring Maori women did apply for the position. For the two Maori women on the staff, I was able sometimes to be a translator of process and an advocate. Even raising the topic of difference, let alone racism, did not always endear me to others. It was a time when government required contractual obligations regarding commitments to the Treaty of Waitangi within social services were useful to add weight to my call. In this country there is a discourse of bicultural development which has been strong in the public sector (Cheyne, O'Brien, & Belgrave, 2000), and which now, as welfare work is moved into the community sector, is often required as part of accountability for government funding.

Although Karen and I spoke often of racism it was a much more difficult conversation to have with a number of others. I expected to work explicitly with staff around commitments to the Treaty of Waitangi throughout the research, but it was not until almost the end of my time there that I was able to do much more than ask questions. (I notice my assumption that I should be able to do more than ask questions. This is related to my position as researcher with a political agenda.) I agreed to offer one of a number of workshops for staff on the Treaty of Waitangi. I found the workshop painful and destructive. The racist images of Maori evoked by a number of staff appalled me. I also felt terrible for the Maori staff members present. I was not an effective facilitator for several of the staff. Perhaps one useful outcome was that the racism revealed strengthened Karen's resolve that all staff who worked in the Agency needed to have a working understanding of the commitments of the Treaty.

One of the most difficult conversations within the workshop was about the term 'Pakeha'. A number of staff vehemently refusing to locate themselves or to be located by others in relation to Maori through using a Maori term to identify themselves. Tension around the politics of identity in the very naming of ourselves symbolised the depth of the difficulty of sustaining conversation around racism and bicultural relations in this country.

4. As woman, mother, mother who has had a baby die

My identities as a woman, as a mother and as a mother who has had a baby die intersected throughout with what it was possible for me to know and the possibility for knowing with others. Many insightful moments happened while I was pegging out the washing, or walking down our driveway to collect the mail, or thinking about my daughter being bullied at school by a boy who was bullied at home by his older brother and father. I see gender intersecting with every aspect of this inquiry.

As much as I have constructed my research as primarily with the staff, there are ways it was also with the women who lived in the Centre, both because I hoped that the research would contribute indirectly to their wellbeing and because I was a person who was present around the place. Although in many ways I occupied quite different subject positions to most of the women in the Centre, as an academic, as Pakeha, as middle-class, as wealthy by comparison and so on, there were undoubtedly times when occupying that discursive space known as wife and mother made it possible to talk about some profound things. The women in the Centre knew me as a researcher, a gardener, a story teller, someone with, but apart from the staff, and a mother.

That I had also had a baby die, usually opened up possibilities for relationship and conversation further. In 1993, my second daughter, Rose, aged 3 ½ months, died in my arms, after half a day in hospital with a sudden devastating and undiagnosed illness. Many of the women in the Centre and among the staff had experienced devastating pain too, often related to their children, and sometimes that meant they saw me as a kindred spirit. On several occasions I was aware that my position as bereaved mother transcended cultural difference.

My relationships with the women in the Centre undoubtedly affected me strongly at times. Partly this was because their stories of profound hardship sometimes overwhelmed me. There were also some very beautiful moments. One evening I gave a ride home to one mother and her 10 day old baby. The following story from my diary describes our homecoming:

Last night when I took D. and her new baby home to Cross Rose, we talked about heaps in the car. In the last month or so she has known two babies who have died – either at birth or shortly after. Also her father-in-law died a few weeks ago. For the first time she saw a dead person as profoundly beautiful. When she was 6 years old her father was murdered, and he looked awful. Since then she has found it really hard to see the dead. Just a few weeks ago, she saw her friend's premature baby, who had died at only a few hours old. D. had looked long and hard at this beautiful wee baby, and after some time, touched her, to be surprised at how lovely she felt. These experiences were intense and moving, as she moved toward the birth of her own baby, fear and hope jostling together.

We talked about the death of my own daughter too.

And all this while the baby slept in the car driving home to Cross Rose. When we got there, D. asked me to come in and see their place. She knew I'd been there lots before, so it seemed there was a special reason to come in which I didn't know. I was keen to get going, to get home to my own children and the fire. But still...it seemed important.

When we got in, the place was different, the institutional living room had been transformed by an old lounge suite, some comfortable chairs, the TV and so on, all rearranged. "It's more homely", they said, and indeed it was. I expressed my pleasure and smelled the delicious dinner cooking.

In the midst of life and death, here was home, and a comfy couch by the heater, and the dinner cooking.

The moment was sublime for me because within it we had connected as mothers in a very powerful way and because the creation of home was in itself sublime within this community of women and children. Treating emotion as epistemologically significant in thinking about 'home', as Gurney (1997) suggests, is a way of resisting the managerialist and psychological discourses of achievement most often visited on the women in the Centre. Sometimes it seemed to me that it was enough that 'home' had

been created for a time, even if the goals of empowerment of the women through transformation of their psyche or income earning potential were not always achieved.

I was aware at a dim level that I was drawn to this Agency because I am drawn to places where the potential for huge pain in life is acknowledged and even worked with. Some of my work since my daughter's death has included researching and writing about the experiences of bereaved parents (Gatenby, 1998) and I do sometimes describe Rose's death as probably the single most defining event in my life. Her death changed my sense of myself/selves and of the world, and others' sense of me, including my position as a researcher.

For many of the women in the Centre, there were events and issues around the care of their children. Some children were statutorily removed from the care of their mothers. Some of my friends sometimes thought that Rose's death would make me very angry with mothers who were considered to be abusing or neglecting children. But instead I tended to identify with the pain of mothers having their children forcibly taken from them. I did not know just how important my own pain around the taking of babies would be in the research, as some of my reflective writing shows:

> *I did not know that I would be venturing into the area of the rights and rites of children and parents. I did not know that I would be witnessing babies being taken from the arms of their mothers. At times this was simply too painful for me. I remember one evening at home after having seen three babies taken over two weeks. In some of my other work I had to prepare a guest lecture for nursing students about the experiences of doing research with bereaved parents and of being a mother who had had a baby die. I simply collapsed with the pain of it all – my own and those of the mothers at the Centre.*
>
> *A woman friend, also a bereaved parent and a therapist, had told me her belief that we needed to grab hold of our pain, that that was the growing edge. I wondered what the growing edge was here. I believe that my embodiment of the pain of those mothers, because of my own experience of tragedy, made me able to hear their stories and see the injustice in ways I could not otherwise have.*

This was a time when paying attention to my feelings led to the articulation of something significant, or showed up the microphysics of power, as Ristock and Pennell (1996) suggest such attention can do.

And on a different occasion:

> *At the conference in November 2000, Children's Rights, Needs and Welfare, a Senior Trainer of Social Workers, a Maori woman, from Child, Youth and Family told a story she introduced as a story of neglect by parents. It was a story of a 12 month old baby who died from hypothermia. He had been taken by his parents up to the skifields of Mt Ruapehu, in a backpack for a day's skiing. It was a sad and shocking story, and the sounds of shock were audible in the lecture theatre. I believe the story was told because it would shock.*
>
> *And yet my reaction was very different to the "oohs' and "aahs" of horror that parents would be so neglectful. I felt again the pain of a parent who has had a baby die. I felt the pain of those parents. I reeled from the judgement of others that a parent should have a baby die. Later I walked over to Maria's office to tell her about the conference so far. Actually I walked over there because she was a dear friend and had been through the times of Rose's birth, life, death and the grieving afterwards. I burst into tears of pain, frustration and anger. I knew that there was some thinking to do about this as the storm of reaction made space for it. This was another time when the pain of my daughter's death would provide the search for another connection, for the moment of illumination.*
>
> *Something in my memory was tantalisingly close but unavailable. Then while I drove home, exhausted, it was available again. Several years before, I had cut out an advertisement to use with a university class on Women and Management. It was a glossy picture of a fit, athletic and handsome white man, running with a baby in a backpack. The baby looked about 8 months old. I was in the midst of caring for my own babies at the time, and I remember thinking how unsafe it would be for a baby to be taken running in a backpack. The advertisement was for some kind of finance company. It*

promised freedom from worry by having finances taken care of by the company. Such freedom was illustrated as being able to go out running with the baby; to have responsibility and freedom, leisure and wealth, and children all at the same time. The man running epitomised the individual consumer, free of encumbrances, able to pursue recreation, wealthy, fit and healthy. There was no mother in the picture. This man needed no one except the finance company. I saw again the gloss of it all.

It was the backpack that teased my mind and linked the two stories. A baby had died of hypothermia in a backpack while his parents were skiing, and in a finance company advertisement a baby had been taken in a backpack for a run by his father. And that picture of the unencumbered white man illustrated my discomfort with much of the conference. The focus on children's "rights" was the focus of an individualistic, consumer based society. Such a focus would always be limited in preventing neglect and abuse. The analysis, the critique presented by many of the presenters was of individuals doing the wrong thing. Parents taking their baby skiing. Fathers beating their wives. Mothers neglecting their children. Where was the critique of a paradigm which provided the setting for such behaviour?

My pain led me to ask about a world in which things happen which mean that babies are taken away from mothers for reasons other than death. This was another time of recognising the way in which we are moved to political action and knowing through our emotions (Ahmed, Kilby, Lury, McNeil, & Skeggs, 2000). That pain combined with my academic background led me to search for critiques of individual rights as the basis of arguing the rights of children and disciplining mothers. This included thinking about the ways in which some mothers are constructed as dangerous. In the next chapter I discuss these critiques further.

5. As Christian woman and social scientist and feminist

I mentioned earlier that one of the things which attracted me to this inquiry was that there were a number of Christian women involved who were also talking about social

justice. I realised I was looking for a place to stand as a Christian woman and social scientist and feminist. Most of this part of the inquiry stayed as first person research and second person research within my relationship with Karen, though Karen and I did also have a number of conversations about the tensions between being positioned as Christian, feminist and social service worker, and the ways in which the work of the Agency emanated from a Christian notion of service and gospel-led social justice.

There is of course a fundamental tension in believing in the possibility of 'God' and holding a poststrucutural view about the difficulties of truth-making. As Weedon (1997) points out, appealing to God is one of the most common ways of asserting truth while at the same time masking the production of the assertion. As a social science academic who has explored poststructural theory, with its questioning of the possibilities of foundationalist truths, 'coming out' as a Christian has felt a risky thing to do. I noticed that in my doctoral proposal I wrote about theology, rather than Christianity, or faith. And certainly within social services in this country many Christians have felt they must position themselves as providers of secular care, in order to be seen as professional and to attract funding. Positioning myself as both feminist social scientist and Christian woman contributing to a church-affiliated social service agency gave me a space to explore the tensions between those positions.

Involving myself in a feminist theology reading group was a way of intentionally setting out to explore what positions might be available as a feminist Christian. I traced in feminist theology the same changes in thinking that have marked other forms of feminism, from language work challenging God as male, to work challenging church structures as patriarchal, to liberal and radical feminist re-interpretations, of the notion of 'God'. Classic texts such as Schussler Fiorenza's *In memory of her* (1983) and Matthew Fox's *A spirituality named compassion* (1999), and the seminar I attended by Professor Breugemann on a re-reading of the Book of Kings as an exploration of relationship between city, state and citizens, provided examples of interpretive work interwoven with a concern for justice.
I found in Sally McFague's (1988) work the idea that God might best be expressed as 'something which is on the side of life', and that Christians believe there are clues to this in the life of Jesus Christ. But beyond that there is no more that can be said with any certainty. From this position, I could invoke my own spirituality as ongoing

exploration of 'godliness', through a particular church which is part of my own cultural context. Through and within the profound friendship which developed between Karen and I, I began to explore the possibility of 'godliness' as happening in the spaces between people, a kind of spirituality which happens through connection, rather than, or sometimes as well as, through deeply personal work by individuals.

Recent writing about action research also refers to inquiry as spiritual practice, so this discourse also provided an academic position from which I might include spiritual exploration as part of doctoral study. Prayerful practice, alone, with Karen and with others, was part of this inquiry. During our week travelling to Stroud and at the workshop itself, Karen and I found many of our conversations with each other and with others, turning to God and spirituality. As I wrote in my diary on the airplane travelling home, and Karen and I talked, Karen challenged me to see this doctoral research as *God's inquiry. Put that in your phd!* One of the most important things I learned from Karen, and through reading and discussion, was that there were many more ways of being Christian than through believing in humanity as a cursed race, forever seeking absolution and salvation through individual profession of guilt. Such learning was important because it paralleled our resistance to constructions of women in the Centre located as dangerous or damaged and needing individual transformation.

There were many complexities around locating myself as Christian in the Agency, not least because there were people there occupying a range of positions in relation to Christianity themselves. One volunteer chaplain, for example, asked me what *heresy* I was reading one day when he saw me reading an academic book. Some staff members were there because the Agency was affiliated to a church; others were there because it was a social service and they viewed professional social service as necessarily secular. In one interesting conversation a group of women staff members talked about being in the Agency as the closest thing they could do to being involved in a church, because of painful events in their lives in relation to sexism and or racism experienced through church involvement.

Locating prayerful practice as part of the inquiry did raise questions for me about the evocation of prayer and other spiritual practices as first person inquiry or as part of action research. Recent descriptions of first person research have begun to mention

spiritual practices such as meditation and prayer as part of the work (see for example, Torbert, 2000). Often the practices are run together in description as if they are the same, a matter which needs teasing out further. Prayer is assumed in the literature to be an individual practice, not as communicative with some 'higher being', nor as potentially shared with others. I suggest it is therefore often assumed to be reflective, rather than a form of action, again a contestable assumption.

6. Friendship and inquiry: Bev and Karen

I have mentioned in a number of places the deep friendship which developed between Karen and I, and I have often spoken of this relationship as being at the heart of the inquiry. I have felt deeply honoured and obligated by the trust and mutuality which developed. It is not just that within action research those who are most insightful and perceptive, most passionate about the work they do, tend to become more significant participants than others (Whyte, 1991), but that in this inquiry and in the Centre, relationships, conversations and connections between people were key sites for resistance of neoliberal discourses, and therefore for imagining transformation. Being able to imagine and explore alternative ways of thinking and living to those we currently experience can be an aspect of close relationships (Brookfield, 1987). Karen described her sense of this in the following extract from a joint paper[31]:

> *My own experience was one of enormous support. I found in Bev someone with whom I could relate on a number of different levels: as a friend, a colleague, a confidante, an academic, a woman.... I recognised how vital supportive relationships are to me and to many of us in leadership roles, which sometimes become isolating and lonely. I became connected with the world about me in different and varying ways; a new vitality bubbled up in me.*

[31] The description is drawn from the keynote paper Karen and I gave at the Conference of the Australia New Zealand Third Sector Research Society in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand (Gatenby & Hume, 2002).

The sense of being a kindred spirit (and I use the word 'spirit' deliberately - we spoke of feeling as 'soulmates') with Karen made it possible for me to maintain an action research position within the Agency. Fairfax (2000) describes the importance of solidarity, of shared passion and commitment to similar social concerns, with leaders in an organisation in action research. Others could see that we were very close in the long impassioned conversations we often had, in the close friendship that grew. And this both opened up and closed down some conversations with other staff, because of course the relationships staff members had with their Director affected how they came to relationships with me.

I have suggested earlier that I was also drawn to working with the Agency because of its explicit Christian commitment (though the majority of staff are not Christian). While I was able to offer to Karen all the opportunities that I had had to read and think about certain kinds of social science theories, Karen offered me conversations about Christian faith, a radical Christianity of the gospel as first and foremost about social justice, and a way of being a Christian activist and social scientist. It was possible for me to become a researcher with the Agency because Karen also had an academic background as a mature woman entering social science study, including feminist study, after hardship and pain in her own life. Karen knew about social constructionism. She had read feminist theory. Now she 'practised' it as a manager. It was a boundary space I was drawn to precisely because of that possibility of theoretical talk substantiated as agency in a setting aiming for transformation.

A number of our conversations turned toward the construction of class in the Agency and in our country, which was significant partly because many people in this country believe we have a 'classless society'. Karen brought a more Marxist critique of social and economic policy than I did and this was often interwoven with an analysis of interaction in the Agency both between staff members and between staff and residents of the Centre. Karen's upbringing in a working class family often led her to position herself as working class in line with the women in the Centre, in contrast to the more middle class upbringing I and some others had experienced. Our discussions about class were interwoven with the kind of analysis of the construction of a dangerous underclass described by Garland (2001) within which we saw a number of the women in the Centre being positioned.

Our many, many long conversations throughout the inquiry provided opportunities for reflection and reflexivity which were significant for both of us. We often talked about the ways each of us was implicated in power relations and the kinds of subject positions which were or were not available to us or which we were or were not able to claim. Writing joint papers about the action inquiry, as activists, and as an academic working with a manager, sometimes provided ways to disrupt the power exercised through each position and/or to forge links between those positions.

In many ways the extraordinarily close relationship which developed between Karen and I provoked me to wonder about the delineation between first and second person research in the action research literature. The limits of the language of first and second person research were stretched and thinned because the boundaries between ourselves were stretched and thinned.

Calling our conversations second person research came to seem artificial in the light of the ways we affected and were affected by each other. The mutuality of our learning together, and much of our positioning, paralleled a topic that became central to the way we saw the work of the Agency and the research. It seemed that what we were about was resisting the individualising discourses so powerful in social service, by giving voice to a faith, a professional practice, and a way of being which was primarily about community, about the connectedness and communion between people. The aim of the Centre was to *build community* between the women and children who lived there, and the staff. We spoke not of the God within people, but of the God who exists between people. We spoke often of connectedness and conversation. Empowerment (and oppression) was constructed as something that happened through relationship, rather than within individual women.

7. Unsettling truth

In chapter 8 I wrote about wanting to unsettle truth and truth-making, the development of a workshop on discourses and a number of other ways of attending to reflexivity and the exercise of power in the work of the Agency. Not surprisingly, unsettling truth also unsettled the positions from which a number of people worked within the Agency. In this respect the third person inquiry was completely

interwoven with the possibilities of first person inquiry by each person involved in the research.

One of the research aims which had emerged with some staff was 'what things create injustice for us and for the women in Cross Rose Centre, and how might we be part of that injustice?' The poem, "Call me by my true names", which I chose to begin my research report to staff with (see Appendix 7) intimated my sense that we are all implicated in power relations which oppress others, and at the very same time may choose to work in ways to transform those power relations. Being reflexive necessarily involves thinking about those power relations, and doing both action research and social service work should also involve acting in ways congruent with that reflexivity. A few staff members, however, saw their work as only morally right and true. They believed others, or the system, did the oppressing; they were the saviours or the source of empowerment. Social service agencies (particularly faith based agencies for some staff) and work such as counselling or social work were the source only of good intent and transformation of others.

The aim of the workshop, in poststructural terms, was to do what Butler (1990) calls 'unsettling taken-for-grantedness', that is to take those categories we most take for granted and make them into questions. It was my academic background and experience as a teacher that enabled me to frame and facilitate this workshop. Running the workshop changed the way I was viewed in the Agency; for some who valued academic work and/or the opportunity to talk about the possibility of transformation, there was a respect; for others, there was concern that I might be critiquing their existence. Munford and Sanders (1999) point out that involving social service workers in research can feel risky for those people as they are required to reflect on their practice in public. To question the expert knowledge through which they are constituted as experts in their work is even more difficult.

After the workshop it did become common for staff to stop and look at me (as a form of surveillance), and sometimes ask questions of themselves whenever they headed toward truth claims. People did become more aware of their conversations as constructive. At the end of my time in the Agency I heard one staff member challenge another for suggesting that the women in the Centre (some of whom had

been accused of abusing or neglecting their children) weren't loved themselves as children and so didn't know how to love their own children. She challenged this comment by pointing out that the women themselves would not say that they weren't loved nor that they did not love their children. For me, this was an important example of the kinds of questioning and challenging which I hoped might become part of the reflexivity of the Agency.

In particular I challenged the times when any of us began a sentence by saying *the reality is*, *the truth is*, *it's only natural that*, and it became a habit for some staff to stop themselves mid-sentence and ask themselves whose truth and whose reality they were conveying and for what purposes. Sometimes they would look at me with a wry smile, and backtrack, and so I became, for that moment, something of a disciplining force. I found this ironic since the rhetoric of much action research is of equalising participation. Staff members were at once acknowledging, accounting for, and sometimes disregarding, a way of being reflexive that I had encouraged.

Later, as a critique of psychology and individualism became a key part of my thinking in the research and part of conversations in the Agency, a few staff members found some of the things I said difficult. It can be hard for counsellors and therapists, for example, to be part of a conversation in which some of us wanted to raise questions about the truth claims of Western psychology for knowing ourselves and others, and therefore about the basis of their work which they intended to be loving and empowering of other women. For these people, I was doubting the subject positions most important to them in the Agency. I walked a tight rope of being respectful of their positions, of understanding the limitations of my own (and they too wanted to throw into doubt my ability to know as an academic subject), of not being authoritative nor foundationalist, and yet of wanting to tease out the complex flow of some particular discursive formations within which we were situated.

For most staff, the language of action research (participation, action and reflection) positioned me as possible friend and colleague, but also mentor, coach and facilitator. I was also a discomforter, as Karen describes[32]:

> *Bev, introduced as a researcher to the staff in Anglican Social Services, was immediately understood in traditional academic terms. They imagined she was here to 'do research on them or on the women in Cross Rose', to ask questions and find answers from a body of theory, so that we could work better with 'these women'. While Bev spent some time explaining about the ways she worked and invited staff to engage with her in conversation about it, it wasn't until they experienced her as an integrated member of the team that they realised she was doing research without really seeming to be doing research, or at least doing it in a different and more inclusive way, and that they were becoming researchers too.*
>
> *The research engaged staff in all sorts of ways in the process of meaning-making, of reflection and critical thinking, encouraging them to look beyond the traditional ways of understanding and constructing the world of social services. This process of engagement was different for each staff member. Some became embracing of this new thinking and the challenges it evoked, others were defensive and protective of their 'knowing' patch. Staff meetings were occasionally fraught with all kinds of tensions as this dynamic was at work. None of us were immune to the impact of the tensions running through the meetings. However I did notice that those who wanted to engage further and pursue different ways of knowing and reading the world, would seek Bev out privately after the meetings. She became an important listener and responder as they made themselves more vulnerable and explorative. I had heard that people can feel deeply insecure and even physically sick when they are moving between different paradigms. I saw this in some staff.*

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[32] The description is drawn from the keynote paper Karen and I gave at the Conference of the Australia New Zealand Third Sector Research Society in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand (Gatenby & Hume, 2002).

Interestingly, I believe that through these encounters, the staff also became co-researchers asking questions of themselves, of the ways meaning had been constructed in their personal and professional lives, in the Agency and the lives of the people they were working alongside. This continues today in our meetings. We continue to grow a culture of critical reflection which seems far less threatening and more acceptable.

Other people too have been changed by the research. As Brooks and Watkins comment in regard to action technologies, "there is no shelter in which researchers and co-researchers can hide from the deeply personal issues that force an uncomfortable element of researcher self-revelation" (1994, p.8). Many action researchers have commented on the increased awareness and sensitivity which has been part of their research, including a changed and changing understanding of themselves and others (Traylen, 1994).

Several writers about action inquiry have remarked that inquiry often involves both physical and emotional nurturing and careful attention to the personal and the political (Reason, 1994c). Hart and Bond suggest that we are required to act "caringly and reciprocally" (1995, p.74) with those we do research with. This was probably most obvious to me early in the inquiry after the death of the son of one staff member. At this point I became positioned most strongly as another bereaved parent in the Agency, and it seemed an entirely appropriate part of the inquiry and of my life in the Agency that I should spend time with this staff member. Several months later when others in the Agency were wanting her to be 'back to normal', I was able to speak about my own experiences of being changed irrevocably by the death of my daughter, and of the very long time (years rather than months) of devastating pain. This experience, along with several others, contributed to some thinking about oppression which occurs through what I called the 'impossibility of mutuality'. It was impossible for others to understand the experience of the death of a child, and in this impossibility they exercised, perhaps unwittingly, an oppressive power. The 'impossibility of mutuality' also became a useful phrase in thinking about some other events and interaction in the Agency, as is discussed further in the next chapter.

8. Third person inquiry: taking the research beyond the Agency

Action inquiry does involve identifying areas of high energy or compelling interest as they emerge (Marshall, 1999). In this inquiry these areas turned out to be an analysis of neoliberal discourses as they were constructed within social service work for women and children, the construction of children's rights and a concomitant construction of dangerous mothers, and the development of a discourse of resistance to both of these. My own interest in the intersections between action research and poststructural perspectives were interwoven with all of these. Karen and I chose especially to present our inquiry at forums in Aotearoa New Zealand because we are both committed to the wellbeing of the people who live here.

Writing conference papers and giving presentations in a number of forums became one way Karen and I conducted third person (and first and second person) inquiry, and the three are strongly connected to each other (Torbert, 2000). Sometimes it also became a way my interpretations were confirmed by Karen and decisions were made about what stories could be shared. Cosier and Glennie (1994) comment that their writing of papers about an action inquiry served their own learning and contributed to wider learning about cooperative knowing. In taking our conversations out to other wider conversations, first, second and third person inquiry merged together. We often articulated more because we were writing or speaking together in public forums. Similarly those forums affected our individual and mutual inquiry. I recall, for example, tentatively commenting on my concerns about the removal of Maori children from their mothers in one conference presentation, and seeing a number of older Maori women nodding their heads in the back of the room to affirm my questioning. This affirmation encouraged me to pursue the issue further.

C. Subjectivity, reflexivity and first, second and third person research

The various subjectivities I positioned myself through and/or was positioned as, each provided particular points of illumination and possibilities for ways of knowing, that

would not have been available, or would have been available differently, to other researchers. The delineation of first, second and third person inquiry has been a useful heuristic device, but became most useful when it was combined with poststructural reflexivity around the exercise of power and the subjectivity of the people involved. I want to raise some questions about first, second and third person research, reflexivity and subjectivity, questions provoked by the very nature of some of the illuminations particularly those which were to do with epistemologies of self or the individual.

Focussing on reflexivity as a research activity is common to both action research and poststructural theory. Foundational to both is a sense of what we mean by self. It is as 'selves' we are posited as reflexive, and if we are reflexive then that is about ourselves in relation to what we know. Poststructural ideas about subjectivity have engaged deliberately with the notion of self, of who we are or who we can be, because of that relationship with what can be known.

To be a researcher within this poststructural framework includes reflexivity about subjectivity, about self; that is self in relation to the research setting and the setting as enmeshed in a number of discourses, and self in relation to research itself as a particular discourse. Both reflexivity and subjectivity are evoked for their potential to extend what we are able to know, with what we are able to know being intricately interwoven with who we are as subjects. To be reflexive about the ways we position ourselves is to understand the workings of our social worlds, to understand the workings of the discourses in which certain subject positions are available to us.

Reflexivity evinces a number of potentialities: an intent to examine the relationship between self and knowing; an intent to examine power in relation to self and in the relationships of self to others, and therefore to knowing; an intent to consciously take up a political position in order to act for change, and the corresponding reflection on that position and its possibilities and outcomes.

Action research sometimes seems to rely on a humanist notion of an essential self, which is developed, nurtured and affirmed through appropriate first person practice and reflection, often based on therapeutic models of self. This makes being an action

and participative researcher and holding a view of self as messy and fragmented, within a location in which discourses valuing psychology and therapy are strong, a complicated and difficult thing. At some levels, first person research may simply be a reconstitution of the individual as the locus of analysis and change, of the individual as privileged over and above the relational, a privileging resisted in this research and the work of the Agency it was located in.

Adkins (2000) calls this reconstitution of the individual an outcome of 'reflexive modernity', a movement she characterises as a re-traditionalising of the individual, through an apparent dislocation from social structures. Individual reflexivity becomes the new form of authority and discipline (Zaretsky, 1994), potentially, for example, re-intensifying the domestic and welfare servicing of women (Adkins, 2000). Action research, and all the women who find an academic home within it - and many women do (Maguire, 2001) - may be further domesticated by the concomitant focus on individual reflexivity, just as the women in the Centre may be further domesticated by a focus on individual counselling or self-sufficiency.

In this inquiry challenges to the delineation of first person and second person research, prayerful practice as other than individual, an exploration of knowing through pain, and the knowing which came through relationship and connection, have all been tied up with a deliberate resistance to discourses of the individual as agent, and as knower and location of knowing. Tracing just a few of the tensions and complexities around my own subjectivity and positioning in the Agency as an action researcher, academic, Pakeha, woman, mother, bereaved parent, and so on, has paralleled a concern with the subject positions available to both staff of the Agency and the women who lived in the Centre.

Despite my concerns about an individualising hegemony within action research, taking up a position as an action researcher has also offered openings to work with social justice in this research site. Taking an action research approach and exploring my own positioning led me to articulating things I could not have articulated before. As a discourse itself and as a subject position, action research offers, like poststructural theory, an interest in transformation. To be reflexive about subjectivity, and as an action researcher, is to evoke an awareness of the possibilities and

impossibilities of action research for transformation, and an awareness of the positioning of self as an action researcher.

I am arguing for an understanding of subjectivity as foundational to reflexivity within action inquiry. My commitment to first person research became most useful when it was linked to trying to understand discourses I was framed within and/or resisting. In a sense there is a de-essentialising of self through making connections between personal experience and critical social science (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). Trying to understand the specificities of subjectivity, both our own and others, is to work with the difficulties and possibilities of transformation. Like Kilby and Lury, I suspect it is crucial to have a "transformative vision of subjectivity which recognises that subjects are always embodied and embedded in relationship with others" (2000, p.256).

Both reflexivity and subjectivity seem to go hand in hand with certain ways of identifying ourselves. Within research accounts these ways of identifying ourselves are most commonly through a particular discourse of social change related research, in which key categories are ethnicity or race, class, gender, profession (such as academic or not academic), and sometimes age, sexual orientation and disablement or otherwise. Thus researchers automatically assume that reflexivity means being reflexive about our own subject positions within those kinds of categories. And so, in this research story I have written about being Pakeha, academic, woman, and so on.

It also became important to me to examine myself in the category of mother who has had a baby die. To even present that category here has felt risky. Sometimes speaking or writing about my own grief and pain provides a point for others to construct me as 'not coping', as 'still grieving', perhaps even as being obsessed by the death of my daughter. Others construct me as wounded and vulnerable, a person in need of sympathy, perhaps of therapy. These constructions come from a set of Western ideas about grief as something passing, as something we work through to a point where it no longer is present in our lives, as something we resolve and move on from, as something which we should not be too public about, as something which requires therapeutic intervention because it disrupts the normal and desirable development of the self as whole, complete, and well-adjusted. Sometimes I was silenced as a researcher by the psychological discourses which constructed me in

these various ways and which placed in doubt my ability to know as a rational human being. To be grieving is sometimes to be constructed as irrational and unable to know 'truth' or 'reality'. This discourse of a certain kind of self is matched by an academic discourse about the kinds of human beings who may know truth.

In contrast, I want to construct myself as having special insight precisely because of my daughter's death. Other people who were part of this research provided space for me to do so, including my supervisors, supportive feminist friends, and my co-researcher, Karen. They enabled me to take up this subject position because of the various subject positions they occupied themselves, such as radical Christian, radical feminist, critical social scientist, and so on. Ellis and Flaherty (1992) point out that emotional processes are crucial components of social experience and that they need to be regarded as both intertwined with physical and cognitive experience, not as separate, competing perspectives, and to be understood in social context.

The interweaving of subjectivity and knowing raises questions about the nature of the 'self', a category unproblematised in much of the action research literature. Within the Western world, to view identity or self as messy, dynamic, fragmented, is a difficult thing. Most Westerners are highly invested in a sense of foundational self, of a true self, with integrity and consistency (Edley, 2001). Calhoun (1994) identifies this sense of self as distinctively modern and notes that self and self-identity are distinctive categories within the discourse of modernity. With its focus on reflection and some aspects of reflexivity, action research may itself be part of the great Enlightenment project, of the project of human development, just as social service aimed at empowering women may also be part of the same project.

In the next chapter, the first in Part III of this thesis, I discuss the dominant neoliberal discourses framing the work of Cross Rose Centre.

Part III

Inquiry contributions

In Part III of this thesis, the contributions of this inquiry to the work of the Agency and to relevant theoretical perspectives are presented. I begin in Chapter 10 by describing the kinds of analysis of the work which emerged through the inquiry, using a number of stories and events to illustrate and drawing in my own reading and thinking prompted by the inquiry. In Chapter 11 I trace a number of changes in social service practice, re-articulation of the Agency's name and mission, and the conscious development of a discourse of resistance through the language and work of the Agency.

In Chapter 12 I discuss some theoretical and practical issues which emerged for me as I wove together a poststructural and an action research approach. I draw this thesis to an end by considering the contributions and validity, in action research terms, of the inquiry.

Chapter 10

Cross Rose Centre and Waikato Anglican Social Services: stories, language, subjectivity, discourses

A. Introduction: stories, incidents, language and discourses

In this chapter I record the kind of analysis that emerged as part of the inquiry including the dominant discourses we noticed and the complex subjectivities for women in the Centre and staff members. I use a number of stories to illustrate the inquiry and draw in my own theoretical exploration around the issues.

In writing this chapter I am aware of the structure I have created in making sense of a multitude of complex and contingent experiences and events. I choose to tell some stories to exemplify particular issues, knowing that there are many other stories which could be told, and choosing those stories which it is safe to tell. In articulating some dominant and resistant discourses in the work of the Agency, I separate the discourses as if they were distinct and boundaried, rather than the contingent, complex and overlapping discursive formations I experienced in the everyday life of the Agency.

I also add to my description of the actions and contributions of the inquiry further theoretical discussion drawn from the flurries of reading inspired by particular issues and events. Some of this discussion also occurred within the Agency. Other parts, though always related to the life of the inquiry in the Agency, have been part of my own theoretical exploration. I am also aware that different staff members participated in different ways and with different commitments in the contributions of the inquiry. I also want to comment that I experienced almost all staff members as loving, committed and passionate about the Centre, no matter what discourses and subjectivities they drew on in their talk and practice.

There are three particular threads which ran through much of the inquiry and which I use to describe some key discourses and significant issues in the work of developing the Centre. These threads are the ongoing construction of the women in the Centre and the subjectivities emerging in those constructions, the related construction and subjectivity of the staff as social service providers, and the construction of the Agency as a church-affiliated social service in Aotearoa New Zealand, in 2000 and 2001. All three threads are complexly interwoven and contingent upon each other, as is discussed further below.

One of my aims through the research was to have it become a habit for staff to think about the ways in which power was working minute by minute in the Agency through their interactions. I particularly wanted them to ask of themselves: in what ways do I, and we, exercise power in the lives of the women in the Centre? To illustrate the kind of analysis which became possible for some staff through our inquiry conversations, I also present and discuss the discourses and subjectivities available, contested and claimed, around one particular small story called "Four eggs and two coffees for breakfast".

B. Construction and subjectivity of the women in the Centre and the staff

In Chapter 8 I described the inquiry as emerging through a growing awareness of language, conversation, story and metaphor, and for some participants, an articulation of some dominant discourses in their work and related subject positions for both staff members and the women in the Centre. I noticed that often in staff meetings there was much discussion of the women as certain kinds of beings; they were constantly positioned by staff members, who in doing so, also positioned themselves. There was also a great deal of talk about gender in the Agency. What it meant to be a man or a woman was constantly being constructed and re-constructed. I wondered if gender was always an open question, partly because staff members were working with men and women who were often constructed as not behaving appropriately as men and women. Part of

the inquiry became being able to reflect on both gender construction and the positioning of the women in the Centre and of ourselves, as it occurred, and sometimes 'troubling the boundaries' (Butler, 1990). In the paragraphs below I reflect on several particular tensions around the construction and positioning of the women.

1. Slim and beautiful women

There were many discussions among staff members about food, hygiene and appearance. A few staff members noticed and commented regularly on what and how much the women ate, as is demonstrated in the story below, "Four eggs and two cups of coffee". Some staff members regularly monitored the appearance of the women. Those who dieted, exercised regularly, began to wear modest clothing and make-up, were sometimes declared to be 'making progress'.

From a feminist perspective I was most uncomfortable about this kind of noticing. I wanted to say, 'for goodness sake, let them eat what they want, let's make the women as happy and comfortable as we possibly can while they are here and give them space to address more significant issues'. Anleu (1999) draws together feminist contributions demonstrating the way in which self-regulation and the politics of women's appearance are significant in Western consumer culture. Ironically, diet, exercise and beauty disciplines "train the female body in docility and obedience to cultural requirements yet at the same time are personally experienced as control and empowerment" (Anleu, 1999, p.111). Women who don't take care of their appearance or monitor their eating are seen as lacking discipline and control and as less morally worthy than those who do. He goes on to note that social services can exert this kind of social control.

Sometimes Karen or I, or sometimes others, did challenge this monitoring of eating and appearance, or similar moral judgments around hygiene practices. The women in the Centre also sometimes resisted the monitoring, most commonly by deliberate flouting of guidelines and restrictions. However we were also always aware that we too choose to fit to some norms for social

acceptability and the women needed to be able to choose their levels of conformity, particularly when significant issues such as the custody of their children rested on reports of socially acceptable behaviour, sometimes evidenced by their 'appearance'. There was always a tension in balancing the need to challenge such norms and to conform to them.

Choosing to do consciousness-raising about the construction of demure, slim, clean, quietly spoken, and beautiful women, with staff members at the 'empowering women' workshop and in discussions with the women in the Centre was one way of making this tension visible, making our own choices more intentional and increasing our awareness of our positioning of others. There were also occasional opportunities to note the intersections of these constructions with culture, and the imposition of Western norms for beauty on Maori women.

Staff members did also become more self-conscious and reflexive in staff meetings about how they were positioning the women and therefore themselves. This was sometimes called part of qualitatively evaluating the work. The following question also became a guide for a while: *would I want a group of women to be discussing me in this way?* In one staff meeting, we were able to laugh wryly together at the ways staff members had been constructing the women as naughty children while at the same time complaining about having been put in the position of nagging parents. We were also able to talk about avoiding labeling women in terms such as the simpleton, the addict, the anorexic, the bully, the fraudster, and so on. This gave an impetus to being able to position the women (and ourselves) as having multiple identities and subject positions accorded them or claimed and contested.

2. Victims

Sometimes the women were positioned as victims, particularly in the early days of the Centre. The first Coordinator had come with a strong background of working in women's refuges – safe houses for women at crisis point escaping from violent partners. She brought with her practices of locking doors, of not

allowing visitors, and other security-conscious habits. These practices positioned staff members as rescuers and protectors, and the women as endangered victims. A few months into the provision of the service, the doors were intentionally, symbolically and physically thrown *wide open* and some rules let go: *let the light in*, said Karen. This significant change in the discourse of the service, and the subject positions available to staff members and the women, was difficult for the first Coordinator who chose to leave not long afterward. Although many staff continued to critique the structural injustices in many of the women's lives, they determined that positioning the women as victims was also an injustice, particularly because in various ways the women often resisted this position too. They often positioned themselves as strong, as did staff members who talked with them about the strength they had shown in dealing with hard things in their lives.

A further way the women were positioned as victims was through labeling them as 'abused women'. The opening of the Centre had attracted some media interest in the city, and a newspaper had reported the Centre as being for "abused women". The label stuck for quite some time: *this haunts us*, said one staff member. Many of the women had indeed been abused, but neither they nor staff members wanted to reduce their identities to victim status nor to the status of a psychological state. Crinall (1999) describes her poststructural feminist research with young women experiencing multiple disadvantages such as homelessness, poverty, emotional, physical and sexual violence, family disconnection, and gender, race and age discrimination, and notes that the women had all kinds of strategies to resist being positioned as victims. In a similar way, it was difficult to position the women in the Centre as victims, when they were often vocal and persistent about their day to day concerns and issues of injustice.

3. And prisoners or criminals

The safe house approach which cast the women as endangered victims also had a flip side, in which the women were positioned as prisoners. Although the Centre was 'opened up', there continued to be occasional conversations in which the

women were cast as 'bad' or criminal, and as occupying 'B Block'. Karen reflects on this later:

> *...you may remember the television series "Bad Girls" supposedly depicting the daily lives, dramas and scheming of women in a prison. To my horror, when this programme was playing on television, I would hear the women at Cross Rose being described as the "bad girls" by a range of people including some among them. That portrayal came easily into the minds of people who believe that women who are alone, have been in violent relationships and are raising the children of those relationships are "sad, mad and bad". They are therefore not to be trusted and are likely to be viewed as dangerous, particularly to their children.*
>
> *Actually, these amazing women have mustered great courage to move beyond relationships shaped by violence precisely because they have children and they don't want their children violated as often they were. Their whole focus becomes centred on doing anything in order to keep their children and to create new lives for them. All too often the apparent ghosts of their past are perceived as who they are now. One of the statements most heard from the women is, "why can't they see the changes I have made? Why don't they believe I can be different to what I was?" The 'sad, mad, bad' label sticks and many despair that they will never be free of it.*[33]

When conversations did begin to construct the women as prisoners and the staff as prison officers, Karen exercised her managerial power to simply say 'this is not acceptable in this Agency'. At one point, Te Aopehirangi also made it clear that she did not wish to be *the prison officer*, but wished to be the *kaiawhina* in the Centre. The Centre was also able to support women on community probation

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[33] The description is drawn from the keynote paper Karen and I gave at the Conference of the Australia New Zealand Third Sector Research Society in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand (Gatenby & Hume, 2002).

sentences, acting, in Karen's words, *as agents of restorative justice*, and thereby claiming a different position for both staff members and the women. Reading Garland's (2001) work on the construction of a dangerous underclass, including single mothers, furthered my thinking about the broader social issue of the construction of certain groups of people as dangerous, as is explored further below.

3. Bad mothers and good mothers

Some especially difficult conversations occurred around the construction of the women as bad and/or dangerous mothers. Staff members were often confronted by the need to think about their own constructions of the perfect mother and it became important to challenge the dichotomy of bad mother/good mother.

We reflected often on the ways in which certain groups of people were constructed as dangerous and increasing levels of control imposed on them. In some of our discussions in the research about the gendering of both social services and social service 'clients', we reflected on the ways in which women who lived in the Centre tended to be demonised as bad mothers, while the men who lived in the flats the Agency also ran were demonised as either or both mentally ill or criminal. To be Maori or Pakeha also meant different versions of being dangerous. We talked about the intersections of gender, ethnicity and injustice in this country at this time.

The women in the Centre did not usually position themselves as bad mothers despite the care and protection issues surrounding their children. In one workshop Karen led, in which they were invited to talk about their strengths and the things they thought they were best at, every single woman positioned herself first and foremost as a good and loving mother.

One of the specific practices of mothering which emerged as involving complex subjectivities was the practice of disciplining children. Waterhouse and McGhee (2002) describe mothers involved in child custody issues as often feeling they don't discipline their children enough, while welfare workers often saw them as

over-disciplining their children. The same was true of the women in the Centre who often wanted to talk about how they could discipline their children more. At the time, there was a lobby group campaigning in the media for the introduction of anti-smacking legislation and this caused much debate. The women wondered if they were bad mothers because they did want to smack their children, and they believed their children would grow up undisciplined if they did not (as many New Zealand parents argued). To discipline their children effectively made them good mothers yet they were aware that social workers may label them as violent if they did smack their children. Overlaying this was the requirement by CYFS as the government funding agency, that the Centre have a policy of 'no smacking'.

In an important conversation Karen talked with the women about having smacked her own children, about not being a perfect mother herself and sometimes being angry and upset with her children, about the stresses of parenting, of parenting alone, and of parenting when there is little money in the household. As a group they were able to acknowledge the tension and power issues involved in having statutory social workers assessing their parenting skills. They also talked about alternatives to smacking, and levels of violence, and different cultural norms for parenting.

In her five-year participatory research project with women/mothers and their welfare workers who were given the opportunity to design their own welfare programmes, Callahan (1999) notes that the women talked about their need to manage their images, to appear pathetic enough to deserve help yet competent enough to keep their children:

> The women in this project revealed how their work is made invisible – someone expresses a complaint about the care of their children which is translated into an investigation into their adequacy as mothers and then into treatment to improve their psychological capability and moral strength as women. What they are actually doing day by day and perhaps doing well is never the subject of the inquiry. (Callahan, 1999, p.56)

She also notes that welfare services did not deal with the poverty of the women, sometimes even exacerbated it, and expected parents to do better at childcare in the face of poverty.

Many feminist critiques of social policy have stressed material factors such as poverty as the major contributors to the problems faced by single mothers, in deliberate contrast to the 'mother-blaming' of new right policies (Woodward, 1997). Such policies tend to demonise single mothers, particularly those who are working class, poor or black, who become the dangerous underclass (Novak, 1997). Often this demonising takes the form of castigation of individuals as lazy, dirty and morally unreliable (Mennell, 1994). Munford and Sanders (1999) note that parents are sometimes unavailable for parenting because of other complex difficulties in their lives not because they are bad parents.

Carabine (2001) draws on Foucault's work on normalising discourses to elucidate a number of shifting discourses of lone motherhood, including the following:

a) lone mothers are a problem because of their growing numbers and dependency on state benefits;

b) lone mothers are irresponsible for having children without the means to support them;

c) lone mothers deliberately get pregnant to obtain benefits;

d) lone mothers are dependent on or undeserving of welfare;

e) lone mothers are bad mothers who produce delinquent youths and girls who become lone mothers themselves;

f) and lone mothers are all the same.

Weedon (1997) advocates consciousness raising with women about discourses of motherhood, something like the discussion described above regarding smacking, through which women can claim other subject positions and make a different sense of their experiences.

Certainly these discourses of lone motherhood were drawn on in conversations in and around the Centre. It was also important to work with alternative subject positions, as is described more fully in the next chapter. Chase and Rogers, in

their feminist sociological work on the "huge profound terrain of motherhood and mothering" (2001, p.xiv), suggest that we should explore:

a) the ways ideas about motherhood are shaped by social and historical conditions, and how those ideas change;

b) who has the power to make their definitions of good mothering stick, and how that power is exercised through social institutions and cultural ideologies;

c) and the perspectives of mothers on mothering and their responses to, accommodation of, or resistance to dominant definitions of mothering.

Some feminist writers have also articulated alternatives. Burn (2000) points out that women who are poor often choose to have more children to provide more helpers or perhaps to ensure the survival of the family. Like Davis (1991), we noticed that having more children sometimes provided hope in the lives of the women in the Centre. Some who had had older children taken into care chose to have more children to again provide that mother-child relationship in their lives. The women in the Centre unremittingly paid much loving attention to babies in the Centre, who represented hope for mothers and made the position of mother possible again, with the status and sense of achievement that can go alongside that position. Those mothers with new babies, however, were often immediately under surveillance by CYFS, because their babies were considered 'at risk' in their care. Thus the mothers were again positioned as dangerous, the burden of proving their safety as mothers began again, and the 'care and protection dance' began again.

The subjectivity of women as mothers always intersected with race and class. One of the most difficult of the conversations about 'bad mothers' occurred in the workshop on 'working biculturally' at which Maori women were cast by one staff member as inherently bad mothers more likely to abuse their children, while at the same time, Te Aopehirangi described her Nan (grandmother) hiding her as a child to make sure the public health nurse did not take her away. A number of people have written about the imposition of Western norms for family life and parenting on Maori whanau and the tragic and unjust consequences for many whanau. Families different to the white heterosexual norm are often deemed deviant and their child rearing practices considered inadequate (Dominelli,

1999). Young describes the way in which social services overlay Western notions of appropriate womanhood with requirements to mother in certain ways:

> There are some parenting standards that pertain to the objective caring that children receive and mothers can and should be faulted for neglecting the care of their children. Often, however, superficial and culturally biased evaluations add to or substitute for such legitimate evaluations. A women's progress toward normality may be measured according to her development of a demure comportment, a pleasant voice, a cheerful presence. She may be encouraged to develop modestly feminine habits of personal attire.... Mothers will often be encouraged to develop mothering and housekeeping styles that may in fact devalue their own cultural and neighbourhood family styles and norms of housekeeping.... (Young, 1997, p.86)

Staff members and the women in the Centre were constantly involved in positioning each other as mothers, sometimes in contrast to each other, sometimes in similarity. Viewing that positioning and the experiences of mothering as complex became more intentional. Sometimes staff members were involved in reporting incidents, occasionally of physical harm to children, to CYFS. They became very intentional and deliberate about the ways those incidents were reported and the ways they and the women were constructed in that reporting, sometimes acknowledging that space between mother and child for a time might be necessary, other times advocating strongly for opportunities for the women to continue caring for their children. Issues around the care and custody of children are discussed further below.

Taking a poststructural approach to the construction of gender, in this case particularly the construction of certain kinds of womanhood and motherhood, also enabled some staff to ask what was being constructed in relation to gender in this Agency. It enabled us to shift away from reified and fixed notions of 'woman' or 'man' (Trinder, 2000). Karen and I talked a number of times, for example, about the Agency's provision of services for men alone, and for women with their children. Such a division of work reflected and recreated women as essentially mothers, carers and nurturers, and as safe with each other. It was almost laughable to imagine an equivalent service for men and children in which

a number of men lived communally with their children. We also noted the ways in which the women in the Centre spoke of themselves as good mothers doing their best in the face of great adversity, despite the ways in which some professionals positioned them.

5. 'Choosing' Cross Rose Centre

One particularly significant reflection came very early in the life of the Centre, out of a growing awareness that the majority of the women coming in to the Centre were doing so because they had been told they would lose custody of their children if they did not do so or because they wished to regain custody of their children. The early language of the Agency had highlighted the staff members' vision of *women **choosing** to come to Cross Rose Centre to rebuild their lives.* Here is Karen's reflection on this at a later date, during which she also evokes justice and injustice as shadow and light, and uses the example to describe the complexities of trying to work for justice:

> *I believe that we are constantly engaged in a dynamic dance among lights and shadows and that attention to this dance and reflection upon where we find ourselves located at any given moment, is what keeps us attentive to our ability to create justices and injustices, liberations and prisons, and all the places in between. For example, we had identified Cross Rose as a place where women would **choose** to come for a time, in order to develop different paths for them and their children. This "choice" factor however emanated from our own positioning in our world of privilege. We soon realised that many of the women who came to stay in Cross Rose did so because they had been told to or their children would be statutorily removed. A woman who is being threatened with the removal of her children unless she undertakes the programmes at Cross Rose, is left with almost no choice. This experience of course is not unfamiliar to many of the women. They had often come from the position of apparently having **chosen** to remain in relationships with violent partners, when actually their very lives and the lives of their children are being threatened should they "choose" to leave. As staff at Cross Rose, we*

believed that we were dancing in the freedom light of choice, only to be confronted with the devastating realisation that it was essentially a lie. We were caught up in the dynamic of our own myth-making.

Throughout the research, I became more and more aware that to every part of our intention and action to become justice seekers, we invariably discovered that we were also complicit in compounding or creating injustice. We continue to live and move and have our being in this dynamic of dancing in and between the lights and the shadows.[34]

Karen comments on the assumption that the women coming in to the Centre were autonomous and independent agents able to make choices. Bauman (2001) describes the illusion of freedom to act as part of powerful individualising practices in Western societies. Other writers have also commented on the language of 'choice' as coming out of discourses of consumerism and managerialism. Mooney (1997), for example, notes that in the mixed economy of care in Britain, a quasi-market was created in which consumers of the service apparently could exercise power through their choice of service, yet care or case managers became the consumer proxies making the decisions about the use of services. Callahan (1999) also suggests that many current welfare services encourage women to shape their identity as receivers or consumers of services, rather than as contributors to the wellbeing of others and the community. In Cross Rose Centre, CYFS social workers were deciding who would come to live at the Centre, at the same time as the contract funding by CYFS meant the Agency was subject to the managerial and statutory social work requirements enacted through the contract auditing processes. While most of the women spoke very movingly of their time in the Centre, a few of the women did 'choose' to leave partly to resist that particular control in their lives.

I began to draw on theorising about the politics and discourses of consumerism, because there were complexities in the Centre around the assumption that people have power through their choice to consume. Stearns (2001) describes

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[34] As above.

consumerism as occurring in a society in which many people articulate their aims and the worth of others, and take their identity, through the acquisition of goods clearly not needed for survival. Cronin (2000) suggests that:

> Discourses of choice have come to form a crucial site in the Western production of ideas of 'individuality'...forms of control are manifested in inner-directed technologies of the self which in consumerism are expressed as technologies of choice. An individual is defined by the 'innate' capacity of 'free choice' and this choice expresses the inner authentic individuality of that person, the abstracted notion of 'choice' becomes an inherent ideal as well as the route to the expression of individuality....The expression and enactment of choice (and the capacity of choosing) is framed as a compulsory route to selfhood. (p.279)

For the women in the Centre, this kind of 'selfhood' was often denied both because of their poverty and therefore their inability to consume or to exercise consumer power, and through their compulsory involvement in the Centre in order to maintain their families. Many critics have pointed out that large numbers of women (and others on low incomes) are disenfranchised by market-led neoliberalism which assumes that democracy is ensured through the ability of consumers to choose what they consume (Briar & Cheyne, 1998). Those who are poor have often been incited to delay consumption for moral reasons while at the same time consumption by the wealthy has been lauded as creating economic growth (Hilton & Daunton, 2001). Choice has often been located alongside 'rights', in a way that lifts the right to choose to a "near-supreme moral importance" (Murray, 1996, p.28). Perhaps the concept of rights is more appropriately applied to the relationship between citizens and the state rather than to family relationships (Murray, 1996), or to close relationships in general (Hutton, 1999).

Staff members began to be very careful about the word 'choice'. In her work with women who have sexually abused children, FitzRoy (1999) argues that while the notion of free market and consumer choice is clearly misleading, viewing women as solely oppressed is also equally misleading, and I would argue, further disempowering. We do sometimes need to be able to talk about the choices individual women make to abuse others, not least because it makes

possible choosing **not** to abuse. FitzRoy (1999) also argues that we need to understand the multiple subjectivities of women, sometimes as victims of injustice and sometimes as perpetrators. In the Centre it was important to be able to set beside critiques of oppression, the ability to talk about the actions of a few mothers as unjust or violent. It was just as important to understand the complexities of the ideas of choice and individual autonomy, and often to challenge them.

6. Empowering women

Closely related to the idea of 'choice' was the idea of 'empowerment'. In the early vision for and language about the Centre, it was hoped to 'empower women'. Many writers have explored the difficulties of liberal uses of the term 'empowerment' and the political contest around it (Walmsley, Reynolds, Shakespeare, & Woolfe, 1993), including in relation to social service work, suggesting for example that a mission for empowerment sometimes increases the power of the giver (Gomm, 1993). The word is often used with an assumption that power can be transferred by persons to other persons. Others have pointed out that the notion that power is exercised might be useful in thinking about empowerment, because it allows analysis of the way the term may be used for just or unjust ends (Parker, Fook, & Pease, 1999). It is not inevitable that emancipatory discourses will be emancipatory, nor that what is empowering in one setting will be empowering in another (Parker et al., 1999). These concerns match those in regard to 'empowering research' which are discussed early in this thesis, and in Chapter 12.

Efforts to empower people may also prove disempowering because their powerlessness has been defined by others, though they may not necessarily have defined themselves in that way (Fook, 2002). The women in the Centre, for example, did not usually position themselves as powerless. Social service practices aimed at empowerment are often assumed to be therapeutic practices (Drewery & McKenzie, 1999), as is described below, and assume that empowerment occurs through individual transformation, often through practices such as assertiveness training, improving interpersonal skills and raising self-

esteem (Ristock & Pennell, 1996). Langan goes further, to suggest that too often empowerment practices are more to do with "reconciling people to being powerless" (2002, p.215), by teaching them to cope with unjust systems. Dean (1999) extends the Foucauldian concept of governmentality to elaborate the exercise of power by service providers through techniques of empowerment and consultation. In social policy circles, empowerment is often used to refer to individual assertion, without a re-thinking of societal factors that disadvantage groups of people (Ristock & Pennell, 1996).

Kilby and Lury (2000) suggest that we need to problematise this notion of empowerment and the notion of progress implicit within it. They argue instead for understanding the complexities of subjectivity as a way of working with the difficulties and possibilities of transformation. Ristock and Pennell (1996) suggest that conceptualising empowerment as including an analysis of power, not only between men and women, but also among women, makes it possible to forge links across differences without obscuring the differences. Fook (2002) suggests that empowerment involves working with the complexities of how power is exercised by others and by people themselves, and suggests that deconstruction, resistance, challenge and reconstruction are key processes of empowerment. In a sense these processes match the overall processes of this action inquiry and therefore the processes of working with the women in the Centre. As is described in Chapter 8, we did become more self-conscious and articulate about the exercise of power in the day to day interactions of the Agency.

Karen's familiarity with the Freirean idea of *conscientising* sometimes led her to conceptualise empowerment as consciousness raising, and she made several opportunities for discussions of social justice issues with the women in the Centre and for the women to act collectively in establishing (and sometimes challenging) the practices of the Centre or in what was sometimes called *co-managing* the Centre. Te Aopehirangi also led a workshop for the women about oppression in their lives, using Maori myth to explore the topic. Young (1997) suggests that this kind of empowerment work can build social solidarity and the possibility of collective action. The women did go to both individual skills based

programmes, and programmes about women and violence, outside the Centre. At the same time the resistance to individualising oppression and empowerment, which became more explicit in the Agency over the time of the inquiry, also added reflexivity about the workings of power.

7. The paramount safety of the child

The idea of empowerment is always embedded within particular contexts, discourses and moral worlds. People with communitarian ideals see empowerment as something quite different to empowerment which leads to independence and autonomy (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997). For many of the women in the Centre empowerment was most often envisaged as having the care and custody of their children.

The tensions around women 'choosing' to come to the Centre, and 'care and protection' issues around the custody of their children, merged for me with some profound personal reflections described in Chapter 9. These reflections came about because I witnessed a number of children being removed from their mothers, sometimes for reasons I agreed with. In some cases, staff members of the Centre, particularly Karen, had been involved in those decisions, and in others CYFS staff had been primary instigators.

However, in some of the stories (and I use the word 'story' in deliberate contrast to the professional social service term 'case'), there seemed to be considerable injustice. The women in the Centre spoke repeatedly about this in their contributions to the Justice Commission on the laws surrounding care of children. They spoke of being punished by social workers: *taking children away is like being sent to jail*, and of affidavits regarding their lives from many years earlier being used as the basis for removing children, despite the changes they had made in their lives. They claimed that their children were removed because mothers were upset and asking for support, or for adult company. In Britain, research has shown what I saw in the women in the Centre, that for many families the greatest fear is of the compulsory removal of their children (Waterhouse & McGhee, 2002). Parents in many countries have persistently

complained about their lack of influence in custody proceedings (Dominelli, 1999) and articulated feelings of deep humiliation, shame and injustice (Scott & O'Neill, 1996).

For some of the women, children were removed because the mother had a violent partner, and in these circumstances it seemed that the mothers were being abused by both their partners and the statutory agency. Sometimes Karen and I wondered if it might be better to keep a child with a mother, although there was some risk, because the pain of separation being caused for mothers and children was so great. I remember vividly one mother describing crying with her partner (who had been violent to her) for several hours after the removal of their baby, and her sense of closeness to him because he was the only one who shared with her the pain of the removal of their children. This resonated with the idea that oppression might sometimes be about the 'impossibility of mutuality'. We also watched some mothers enter a downward spiral of addiction and mental illness in response to the removal of their children. We also saw the effects of inappropriate alternative care arrangements for a few children. As Anglin (1999) points out, we can not assume that children are necessarily safer when they are placed in statutory care.

The argument commonly used when raising such difficult issues is to say that the 'safety of the child is paramount'. This phrase had been used in early writing about the philosophy and practices of the Centre, as is common in social services for families at this time, and it is a standard imposed by CYFS contracts with community based social services. CYFS 'trainers' also provide education on the principle and the practices and systems which social services must have in place to enact the principle.

It seemed almost impossible to challenge this principle or to think otherwise, an indication to me that that is exactly where we should look carefully at the systems of governmentality. It was a time when in our country it was almost unthinkable that the necessity of removing 'at risk' children from their parents, could be questioned; in discourse terms – such a powerful formation that thinking anything else seemed impossible. A number of us did suggest

sometimes that there must be alternatives to the removal of children, that sometimes there was something very difficult and potentially unjust about the principle of the 'paramountcy of the safety of the child'.

This principle is the foundation of much child and family social service work in our country at the moment. The argument is that above all else, children must be kept safe. In practice, children are often removed from mothers and sometimes fathers, because parents are considered unsafe. Removal can happen when a father is considered dangerous whether or not the mother is also considered dangerous to the child, to prevent children being damaged by witnessing violence between parents (Pryor & Rodgers, 2001). Children are placed with other family members or with foster parents, often moving from foster home to foster home. Many of the children statutorily removed are Maori.

We also discussed the strength of the discourse surrounding the 'paramountcy of the safety of the child'. It seemed that we could only whisper that sometimes the principle of the paramountcy of the child caused too much pain for families and relationships, for the principle to be an immutable human right for children, as it was being cast in a number of social policy arenas and in contract required and statutorily enacted practices around the women and children in the Centre. We looked for ways in which children, mothers, fathers, families and whanau could all be safe.

Resistance to the 'truth-making' embedded in the 'paramountcy of the child' was at this time able to come more publicly from Maori, who could argue from a position of self-determination as a collectivist culture. Some years ago, the Report of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Maori perspective for the Department of Social Welfare, *Puao-te-ata-tu* (1986), had challenged the power which operated through the principle of the paramountcy of child safety, saying that at the heart of the matter lay a profound misunderstanding of the place of the child in Maori society:

> The Maori child is not to be viewed in isolation, or even as part of a nuclear family, but as a member of a wider kin group or hapu community that has traditionally exercised responsibility for the child's care and

placement. The technique, in the Committee's opinion, must be to reaffirm the hapu bonds and capitalise on the traditional strengths of the wider group.

This needs emphasis. The guiding principle in the current legislation is that the welfare of the child shall be regarded as the first and paramount consideration. There need be no inherent conflict between that and the customary preference for the maintenance of children within the hapu. The current principle is seen in practice as negating the right of the group to care for its own or to be heard in the proceedings. (Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Maori Perspective for the Department of Social Welfare, 1986, p.29)

A number of Maori leaders had begun to re-ignite this challenge (Brown, 2000). In several conversations I also heard challenges around the culturally specific construction of what constituted neglect or abuse of children, while at the same time CYFS workers were claiming universal guidelines for what constituted neglect or abuse.

For Pakeha, by comparison, there were few obvious points from which critique might emanate. In other countries and from other first nations groups, there had been some questioning of the principle. In Canada, for example, Anglin (1999) had challenged the Department of Justice to consider the ways in which child welfare 'science' drawn from disciplines such as psychology, combined with legal discourses (Hawes, 1991) had led to a focus on risk assessment and risk management. The focus had shifted from protection of children who had been harmed, to assessment of the likelihood of harm in order to provide protection. This risk focus for children becomes part of the normative power of risk society (Anglin, 1999; James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998), in which future safety becomes a shifting moral standard through which power is exercised (Beck, 1999).[35] Welfare and government professionals then become increasingly risk adverse in

[33] More recently other authors have also noted the impact of risk management as a key part of current managerialism on the not-for-profit sector (Kenny, 2002).

this risk management environment (Gilroy, 1999), and move to establish tighter and tighter practice codes, best practice standards and auditing measures. Such moves often bring about increasing numbers of children going into care, litigious approaches to auditing, increasing emphases on policing of both families and welfare agencies, and further neglect of parents in need (Anglin, 1999). The concern is with a defensible approach to child custody, and it is a powerful form of governmentality (Dingwall, Eekelaar, & Murray, 1995). All of these outcomes can work against the wellbeing of children and families.

The move to paramountcy of the safety of the child may well have increased other significant risks, including the likelihood that children will be removed from their families unnecessarily, that family relationships are stressed and damaged, and that children may face harm within the care system (Anglin, 1999). Anglin suggests a move away from the pendulum swing of the paramountcy principle to a system where children, families, and a range of welfare professionals work with the particular context of each child and family to enhance well-being.

As I have written this thesis and reflected further on events around some of the women and children in the Centre, and conversations and staff meetings among staff members, I have begun to think that the risk focus of the principle of the paramount safety of the child has required the implicit creation of a dangerous and often silent other. Justifying the removal of children required that mothers were constructed as dangerous, though the language was primarily the paramount safety of the child as a human right. Ife (2001) suggests that child protection workers know all too well the need to find someone to blame. The powerful discourse of the rights of children to safety and protection merged with the discourses of risk management, managerial accountability, mother-blaming or bad mothering, and the construction of the dangerous underclass, to produce some very unjust, destructive and painful outcomes for some mothers, some fathers, and their children. Race and class intersected with all of these discourses to produce worse outcomes for Maori, working class and poor women and children.

I also saw times when the risk for the welfare worker of not removing a child was a key part of a decision to take a child into care. Welfare workers were fearful of the consequences of not removing a child who might be harmed, as the media coverage and public fear of harm to children escalated. In a parallel fashion, CYFS required of the staff members of the Agency that they work within the principle of the paramount safety of the child, developed policies and practices around it, and proved their adherence to those. In practice, staff members sometimes faced difficult decisions about the point at which they might involve statutory social workers, knowing that **not to do so** may be seen as failure to act responsibly, failure to act within the law or within the Agency's funding contract, or may endanger a child, and knowing that **to do so** may involve poor decision-making with significant impacts on the lives of the women and children concerned, including endangering the child.

In Chapter 9 I described the two 'backpack stories' which for me linked discourses about the safety of children, consumerism and compulsory individuality (Cronin, 2000), the rights of children and arguments about rights within neoliberal frameworks. The story of the baby dying of exposure in a backpack on a mountain was told at the conference 'Children's Rights, Needs and Welfare', organised by the Law School at the University of Waikato. The emphasis in Western law on human rights legislation as a route to justice was apparent. In his keynote address, however, Moana Jackson, prominent Maori activist and academic, challenged the very idea of **rights** by arguing that ensuring the correct cultural **rites** surrounding Maori children, whanau and hapu would do much more to ensure the wellbeing of Maori children. He argued that in law, the hapu should in the end be responsible for Maori children, not the Attorney General as is the case currently.

My reflections on the rights and rites surrounding children, the removal of children from mothers in the Centre, the death of my own daughter, the tragic backpack story and the advertisement of 'neoliberal man' running with a baby in a backpack, prompted a flurry of reading about the rights of children and the relationships between children and their parents or whanau. The rights of children was a discourse gaining ground through the United Nations Convention

on the Rights of the Child, which the Aotearoa New Zealand government was considering ratifying, and matching it was a growing use of the language of the rights and responsibilities of parents.

Over the last century there has been a growing focus on a child rights perspective drawing on developments in the human rights field more generally (Hawes, 1991). While the human rights perspective is supported by many and arguably used for significant justice ends, others have critiqued the emphasis on rights as individualistic and disruptive of families and communities (James et al., 1998). There has been criticism of the artificial separation of the interests of the child from the interests of the family, and of the reductionist focus on rights in social relations between individuals in comparison say, to a focus on love or trust (King & Piper, 1995). Others have argued for the embedding of children's rights within the relationships of mutuality and reciprocity in families (Dominelli, 1999).

Recent feminist writing also challenges the possibilities for justice in human rights discourses (Bryson, 1999; Pickup, Williams, & Sweetman, 2001) as have indigenous activists from a number of regions, who have argued the rights discourse to be another form of Western colonisation (Coomaraswamy, 1994; Pollis, 2000). Rights are not essentially human but are "historically produced and defined along exclusive and partial criteria" (Ahmed, Kilby, Lury, McNeil, & Skeggs, 2000, p.18). Foucault (1994) critiques the way in which the language and laws of rights are used to conceptualise political sovereignty, the way power is exercised and the terms by which it may be challenged. Speaking the language of rights produces the very groups differentiated as having rights and in so doing excludes others.

In my reading I began to search for other ways of conceptualising the relationship between parents and children, ways which would not create a dichotomy between the needs or rights of parents and children and which would express the sense I had of connection to my own children. Murray's *The worth of a child* (1996) was illuminating. He suggests that mutuality might be a better representation of what is valuable in parent-child relationships, rather than the

traditional models of the child as property, or the parent as steward. He points out that:

> many adults *need* children for their own flourishing and that what we value about children is distinct from and incompatible with commercialisation and the values of the marketplace. (1996, p.11)

He goes on to demonstrate the limitations of the language of rights in conceptualising family life and argues:

> We need a model...that acknowledges the immense stake parents and children have in each other's flourishing. We need a model that emphasises the central importance of the *relationship*, without losing sight of the individuality of the parties. (1996, p.61)

This seemed to me to be a discourse of resistance to current dominant discourses surrounding and constructing women and children, though I would want to add to the model an ongoing reflexivity about the relations of power embedded within parent-child relationships. In many ways this alternative discourse matched the discourse of resistance which developed in the Agency and which is described further in the next chapter.

8. Clients in need of therapy

In a number of ways the discussion above has touched on the power of psychological discourses in this social service work with women. Understanding those discourses, the subject positions they did or did not make available and the exercise of power through the discourses became a significant thread of the action inquiry. I use the term psychological discourses to refer to a discursive formation constructing and emanating out of a range of social sciences variously including psychiatry, psychology, psychotherapy and counselling, though I also acknowledge the significant differences among them, including the exercise of power which occurs between the discourses.[36]

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[36] Many authors have noted the hierarchy of disciplines within these discourses, for example, noting the dominance of psychiatry as a strongly scientific, male and medical discourse (Drewery & McKenzie, 1999).

Karen and I became increasingly concerned about the focus on counselling for changing the women's lives. In the early days of the Centre, for example, some staff members believed the women would need counselling every day. The psychological discourse seemed to locate both problems and solutions in the women themselves and not in social structures in which they were embedded, or in discourses which allowed them only certain subject positions. The tendency to locate problems and solutions in individuals has been noted by others in our country too (Cheyne, O'Brien, & Belgrave, 2000). Therapy can be both individualising and de-politicising (Young, 1997). In the Centre empowering the women or changing their lives was not to be a political action but a relearning of how they should be in the world, to be 'good women' and 'healed selves'. Locating the women as dangerous, bad, mad or sad mothers reproduced images of pathology established through psychological discourses and requiring intervention through psychology (Parker, 1999).

Foucault (1977) suggests that practices such as counselling offer modern forms of the confessional through which power is exercised in the right of the person confessed to, to console, guide, forgive, judge or reconcile, or to 'know'. Sometimes the women were framed in the psychological discourse as unutterably damaged by their lives and therefore as destined to be outcast or lonely or only ever to be victims (Kaye, 1999). The women often resisted regular counselling in a variety of ways, refusing to be counselled by particular staff members or commenting that they didn't want anyone *invading* their past and emotions. Attempts to establish group therapy at one point led to a great deal of unhappiness and challenge by the women. Sometimes too, counselling did make a significant difference to some women.

I mentioned in the last Chapter that the phrase 'the impossibility of mutuality' had been meaningful for me, particularly in relation to the experience of being a bereaved parent. At the same time that I was thinking about that, a particular event for Karen provoked the two of us to think about the ways in which counselling as a profession, with professional boundaries and professional codes of ethics might also make mutuality impossible. This is the story Karen told me, as I recorded it in my dairy:

One of the counsellors came into my [Karen's] *office today and handed me a pair of ear rings. P.* [one of the first women in the Centre and one of the longest staying] *had given her the ear rings to say thank you to her for the gift of her support over her time at the Centre. They were a really precious pair of earrings from P. who owns almost nothing. The counsellor told P. that she couldn't accept the ear rings. The counsellor noticed that P. looked very upset and so later went back and accepted the gift. Then she came into my office and told me I had to have them because it was against her code of ethics to accept a gift and she took her code of ethics very seriously. She wanted nothing to do with the earrings.*

We talked about the mutuality of gift giving. P. felt that she had been gifted care and support from the counsellor, who then would not accept a gift from P. For the counsellor, the return to accept the gift came from a position of empathy with P., but in her position of professional counsellor she could not hold on to the gift and commanded that the manager do something with them. The code of ethics of the counsellor and her belief in professional boundaries made it impossible from that subject position to interact as equals with mutuality and reciprocity. Perhaps sometimes social workers and counsellors use concepts such as 'professional boundaries' to interrogate and discipline their clients (hooks, 1994). Others have suggested that professional codes of ethics have provided institutional ways of governing forms of therapy under cover of a rhetoric of protecting clients (Parker, 1999). Social work, counselling and other 'helping' professions can be a means of this kind of "authoritarian professionalism" (Rossiter, Prilleltensky, & Walsh-Bowers, 2000, p.27). The increasing demand for professionalism within social services and the community sector has enabled the construction of a range of experts with scientific knowledge and material precision (Williams, 1993).

We noted also the authority which court-appointed psychologists had to decide if a mother should be able to care for her children. In court cases relating to care and custody it was not uncommon for a psychologist to observe a mother in the Centre with her children for a few hours in order to make an assessment of the mothering of that woman as a basis for a court decision. The reports of staff in

the Centre, based on several months of observation and involvement, counted for considerably less. Karen describes this exercise of expert power:

> *In the social services field we tend to pride ourselves on being able to deconstruct "expert" and work collaboratively with families etc etc. Yet there is still an alarmingly powerful hierarchy of knowledge that is used to determine who is safe and able to be a mother. Time and time again our experience has been that the observations, reports and experiences of both the women in residence and our staff are subsumed under or obliterated by the "professional" report of the psychologist whose only contact with the mother will be through a two hour observation. The women are terrified of these times knowing that every little nuance, gesture or decision will be under scrutiny. Their futures with their children are in the hands of this expert stranger. All too often we end up at odds and feel we fail in our advocacy for these families. Our powerlessness is acutely felt and yet it is only a fraction of what the mothers are feeling throughout this process. This solidarity with the women in their injustice compels us to continue to call to account this 'expert knowledge' of another human being.*[37]

One particular challenge to this expert knowledge and a particular professional boundary came through discussions about the maintenance of files regarding the women in the Centre. Counsellors in the Centre wished their counselling files to be confidential to them and the women, a philosophy which has been important in client safety in medical settings, and which has been argued in a number of feminist arenas. Within the Centre though, this practice seemed to provide for counsellors exercising further their expert power in their relationships with the women and with other staff members, since they were then positioned as the only ones 'really knowing' the women. Ironically, a CYFS audit of the service,

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[37] The description is drawn from the keynote paper Karen and I gave at the Conference of the Australia New Zealand Third Sector Research Society in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand (Gatenby & Hume, 2002).

required that the files be seen as belonging to the Agency, partly for managerial purposes as is described further below.

Toward the end of the first year of Cross Rose Centre's operation all of the staff visited St Mary's Family Centre, an Anglican social service with residential flats for parents and their children, in Auckland, 2 hours drive away. The impetus was to make an opportunity to build relationships with staff members in another social service doing similar work (and there are very few of these in Aotearoa New Zealand) and to learn from a Centre which had been operating for some years. The visit provided an example of a strongly Western psychology based programme, with intensive, minute by minute psychological monitoring and intervention, particularly of the young mothers involved, together with a focus on mothers learning domestic skills, such as cooking and sewing. The children were also constructed as a group of people with specific psychological needs (Jackson, 2000) through the involvement of a child psychologist as a key staff member. For Karen and some others, the visit showed clearly the power of the psychological discourse and motivated the development of alternatives.

For a few other staff members locating themselves strongly within psychological discourses, it provoked concern that the work in Cross Rose Centre was not based on sound practice, because there were not enough staff members who were experts in psychology or related disciplines. In one difficult meeting, a staff member said in response to challenges about the power she was exercising in relation to the women in the Centre and to other staff members, *you need to listen to me because I am the one who will be listened to in Court.* Parker (1999) suggests that many psychology professionals find it very difficult to reflect on their exercise of power. A few staff members chose to leave the Agency as the critique of psychological discourses grew and alternative ways of working with the women were developed.

At times there was discussion about the appropriateness of Pakeha counsellors counselling Maori women, or of there not being Maori counselling available. Critiques of psychology and psychotherapy have included critiques of the Western individualisation of the self at their base, and the related idea that counsellors assist people to liberate the 'self' from problems internal to the client

but known by the counsellor (Ahmed, 1990). They have also included critiques of the reliance of Western psychology on 'data' drawn from mostly Europeans, mostly men, and mostly middle-class individuals, which is then authorised through the match of the theory developed through the data, with Europeans to whom it is applied, who then become the normative standard for all others (Robinson, 2002). In resistance to Western models, Te Aopehirangi chose to enrol in and complete the Diploma in Te Whiuwhiu o te Hau - Maori counselling, so that counselling from within a Maori worldview and framework would also be available at the Centre.

Some key events occurred around mental health/illness of women. We recognised the power of the discourses of mental health. Although recent research in Aotearoa New Zealand problematises psychiatric intervention as the route to recovery from psychiatrically defined mental illness (Lapsley, Nikora, & Black, 2002), choosing sometimes to resist the discourse was very difficult as a social service agency. It was one thing to be able to deconstruct the idea of psychopathology and mental illness, but as a staff member in a social service agency, quite a different thing to encounter a woman whose behaviour could be read as suicidal, or schizophrenic, or severely depressed. In many situations the Agency was required to demonstrate its effective management and its reduction of risk by involving mental health 'experts', and points of resistance needed always to be chosen carefully.

There has been considerable academic work critiquing psychology as a dominant discourse. Billig (1997), for example, notes that the internal states or processes studied by psychologists, psychotherapists and others are assumed to be true and observable through related behaviours, but are historical and ideological creations. This became most clear to Karen when a local psychology academic generously offered to run a workshop for staff, on stress. Karen commented afterward that she thought 'stress', despite the 'scientific' evidence presented, was just a particular construction claiming to be truth, that might be useful sometimes, but which she wasn't going to use to speak about her own life. Partly her analysis came out of trying to use the concept in relation to the lives of the women in the Centre. While it was readily interwoven with managerial

discourses (it is managers who suffer from stress), it was much harder to use to speak about women living in poverty, many of whom were Maori. She noted the gender, class and race bias of the concept and its separation from issues of the impact of social injustice on the lives of women.

One particular critique which resonated most strongly for me, came from Donna, the second Coordinator of the Centre. It came in thoughtful conversations between us after a number of statements had been made in meetings, based on the psychological knowledge that 'women who have been abused as children are more likely to abuse their own children' (Anleu, 1999). Donna wanted to resist this most strongly both for herself and for the women in the Centre. In her own childhood there were experiences which would currently be labelled as abuse, but for which she would not have wanted to be removed from her parents. As a mother now, she was very clear that those experiences meant that she did not do the same to her own children, that she wanted something different for them. She refused to allow the power of the prediction in her own life and simultaneously was clear that that power of prediction should not be exercised to remove children who were safe with their mothers in the Centre. In her resistance she was claiming another knowledge of her own life and of a basis for her professional practice.

I began to read more of the critiques of Western psychological discourses, including deconstructive and feminist psychology (Weatherall, 2002) and critiques of Western individualism, both of which work together to instantiate the liberal, humanist and autonomous individual (Kaye, 1999), responsible for her own fate and distinctly unconnected to the stories of others and of societies (Bauman, 2001). Foucault (1977) suggests that those in our society who are most strongly disciplined are also most strongly individualised. The production of this power is hidden by the very focus on "rugged individualism" (hooks, 2000, p.81) as the source of fulfilment and happiness.

The process of locating others as individual selves through forms of therapy often occurs in the 'helping' professions, although there are other ways people in these professions can and do work. Parker (1999) argues, for example, for a

deconstructive therapy which is about both therapist and client locating problems in certain cultural practices and patterns of power which locate people as unable to do anything about their positions. The staff in the Centre increasingly worked in ways which provided alternative positions for the women and therefore the possibility of transformation.

Using a poststructural theoretical base became more intentional as the inquiry emerged, because it provided a way of challenging the knowledge of true and immutable selves, sustained through psychological and other discourses. Calhoun suggests the modern "preference for individualistic psychologistic solutions to problems, and a tendency to accept the illusory solutions offered by strong identity claims on behalf of nations, races, and other putatively undifferentiated categories" are both ways of refusing to "work in complex struggles for social transformation" (1994, p.29). The work of Cross Rose Centre was about struggling to work with both the possibility and the complexity of transformation.

C. Social service agency matters

This inquiry was located in a particular organisation most often constructed as a not-for-profit, church-affiliated, social service agency. In Chapters 5 and 6, I wrote about the ways in which a discourse of the not-for-profit or community sector has grown, partly out of critiques of the import of managerialism into this sector. In the following two sections I discuss the discourse of managerialism as it was played out in this site and the politics of being located as a church-affiliated agency.

1. Managerialism

Over the five years Karen had led the Agency, there had been a growing requirement to 'manage' the Agency, as Karen later described:

It is interesting to reflect upon the different impacts of neoliberal managerialism on the Agency and the way we have structured ourselves according to the demands of the government as contractor and many funders as investors. Along with this came a whole new vocabulary to describe our relationships and purpose. I have witnessed the coopting of spiritual values as important psycho-emotional components in employee/employer relationships, and struggled to change the practice of the Agency to meet the "business viability standards" of a government contractor. The pursuit of justice has become as imperative for us as it is for those seeking our support.

The insidiousness of this ideology and the infusion of its principles into so much of our life has ironically made us more attentive to the subtleties and to the moments where we might achieve a greater sense of justice, which is very different to the bold statements and powerful activism of say the Hikoi of Hope.[38]

Karen and a number of others in the Agency had already articulated a critique of managerialism before this inquiry began, including suggesting that government contractors kept community organisations too busy with the *busyness of the business* to challenge social and economic policy. They had also noted the cooption of the language of the church, such as *vision* and *mission*, into the language of strategic planning, particularly through the struggle to establish Te Ara Hou. As a social service organisation they experienced the power of the idea that organisations which are managed well are managed for efficiency and effectiveness of certain kinds of outcomes. One of the most obviously co-opted terms was the word *service*. Within the managerialist discourses, the Agency provided a service for a certain 'market', was required to 'market' that 'service',

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[38] The description is drawn from the keynote paper Karen and I gave at the Conference of the Australia New Zealand Third Sector Research Society in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand (Gatenby & Hume, 2002). The 1998 Hikoi of Hope was a walking of the length of Aotearoa/New Zealand in protest at growing poverty and exclusion. It was organised primarily by the mainstream churches, and culminated in a demonstration at Parliament.

and to interact with the 'clients', 'customers' or 'consumers' of that 'service'. In contrast, Karen directed that the women in the Centre were not to be called clients or customers or consumers, to resist both market discourse and professional discourses of social work (Ife, 2001). She also articulated that the Christian notion of service was fundamental to work in this social service, as is explored further in the next chapter.

Over the time of this inquiry, the terms *partnership* and *collaboration* were used increasingly to describe a desired relationship between government and community organisations. In one of our conversations about managerialism, Karen described this language as a co-option:

> *The rhetoric at the moment is partnership, and do you know, one of the things I've come to realise is that all the values that we hold so dear have been co-opted, are being co-opted by people who can see that that's the way to get us...most people in the social service sector...there's a notion of collaboration, cooperation, partnership, that's nothing new for us, we survived on networks, networks were the key to the work...it created a web and so the notion of partnership is not new, but the way it's being presented to us is very new, because now this partnership has lots of tags attached to it. Now the partnership has to be formalised by contracts and memorandums of understanding and agreements...you know when you talk about a partnership with government there's no such thing, it can't happen because the power imbalance is so great...*

The evocation of partnership and collaboration didn't sit well with the ethos of competition embedded within the contracting culture, nor the power government organisations exercised through the contracting of services.

In resistance to the model of competition, Karen led the Agency in working deliberately with staff from a number of other community agencies, particularly those providing services for mothers and children and articulating similar values. However this was not possible with staff in some agencies who positioned themselves as in competition with the Agency or the Centre. At the time there

was also much talk about getting rid of *duplication of services*, based on the idea that efficiency and effective use of resources couldn't happen if more than one agency appeared to be providing similar services. It seemed to be a way of reducing resources in the community sector. In several conversations and meetings we talked about the need for many people to do this kind of work, from many perspectives and in many locations.

At the same time as the critique and some resistance grew, we also talked about the managerial controls which could not usually be resisted. Without the funding of CYFS, the Centre would not have been able to continue, and thus audits needed to be taken seriously and a number of requirements to be met. There were increasing levels of documentation required, one of the ways which managerialism has intersected with the professionalisation of social services, both often from a heightened awareness of liability (Gilroy, 1999). Calls for increasing managerial controls came from within the organisation sometimes too. Some Board members, for example, asked Karen several times if she was doing regular performance reviews with staff. Her reply, with a smile, was always that she does performance review with her staff *every day*. It was a way of safely refusing to adopt a managerial system while still acknowledging that talk and feedback and relationships with staff members were crucial to the work of the Agency.

The women in the Centre sometimes also resisted managerial systems. One of the biggest issues was the Centre daily timetable, which for some months staff members constantly discussed and revised and imposed. As Foucault (1977) points out, we need to be aware of the points at which systems are instituted, as at those points power is exercised, often with the illusion of inevitability, naturalness and neutrality. Having a daily timetable for the women was often spoken of as about efficiency and discipline, and the women resisted it strongly.

During the inquiry, the critique of managerialism grew further, particularly as it intersected with critiques of psychological discourses as described above. One of the most obvious intersections occurred over the first year or so of the work of the Centre, during which time, CYFS staff auditing the work of the Agency as

required within the funding contract, decreed that staff members were to work in certain ways with the women in the Centre. Specifically, they were required to assist the women to set three-monthly goals for their time in the Centre, to outline a process for managing the achievement of those goals, and to identify how they would know when the goals had been achieved. This process, of course, closely parallels typical strategic planning processes within managerialist systems, including goal setting, action plans and performance indicators. The process relies on the idea that all work processes can and should be rationalised by breaking them down in to their constituent parts so that they can be understood and controlled, one facet of what Ingersoll and Adams (1986) call the managerial metamyth. The extension of this idea to the empowerment of women is typical of the organisation of social work and welfare services within managerialist discourses (Hough, 1999).

There were a number of layers to the exercise of power. The women were to manage themselves and to be managed by the staff through a goal setting and achievement process. Staff members were to manage themselves and were being managed by CYFS through the process also, since future audits were to include checking that the goals the women set had been reached. These audits thus also were the instrument for ensuring a certain kind of outcomes focus in the work of the Agency. If the women achieved their goals, then the Agency could show CYFS that it had used the financial resources provided through the contract, efficiently and effectively. The "market-mimicking behaviour" (Jensen & Sineau, 2001, p.10) of the public sector agency matched the notion that women would choose to come to the Centre, as described above, making their access to the 'service' a matter of their own market capacity.

The Agency would be providing good 'value for money', an indicator of success, if the women's goals, which they had been required to set and which were to be measurable in certain kinds of ways, had been achieved. Dominelli (1999) suggests that the managerial focus by government contracting agencies on value for money, works against considered investigation and judgement of the needs of families and children and impedes involvement of parents in decision-making regarding their children. In the Centre, the timeframe required by CYFS to be

imposed around the women's goals often worked against slow and patient change, building of relationships and changing ways of living.

This focus on goal-setting and achievement instantiated a certain kind of success as an indication of the value of the Agency. Individual progress for the women was to be through the achievement of individual markers of success, and the progress of the Agency was to be measured through the achievement of managerial goals in relation to both the women in the Centre and the staff. In this way psychological principles of individual agency and self-fulfilment merged with managerial principles of efficiency often phrased in relation to social service work as the achievement of social outcomes. Unfortunately, denoting success in this way allowed a concomitant construction of failure as the lack of achievement of goals or of measurable progress. Garland (2001) suggests that the apparent freedom for individuals of the market ideology is premised upon the control and exclusion of certain groups, even though the language of the market may be the instrument of control. Part of the discourse of resistance in the Agency included challenging the dichotomy of success and failure, as is discussed further in the next chapter.

Miller and Rose (2001/1988) link managerial discourses and psychological discourses as part of the current technologies through which individuals are governed, particularly by attention to the development of self and the invocation of mental adjustment and maladjustment. In the inquiry we noticed the links between the language of human resource management and the language of social service, noting the similarities around fulfilment and achievement and the similarities as mechanisms of control. There were also differences, because the governmentality of social service intersected with discourses of crime and mental illness in ways that human resource management did not. I have been most interested in the work of Miller and Rose because they use the establishment and development of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations to illustrate the rise of psycho-social interventions in family life, organisational life and personal life, and the Institute has also been credited with contributing to the development of action research technologies. In Chapter 12, I explore possible theoretical connections more closely.

Ironically, in light of the intertwining of psychological and managerial discourses, Karen's ability to exercise power as a manager (and mine as a researcher from a management school) was sometimes useful in resisting the power of other staff members to locate themselves as psychological experts, thus using alternative positions to challenge a professional status often critiqued as elitist and disempowering (Fook, 2000). It seemed there were "unexpected crevices" (Ransom, 1997, p.25) in the managerialist discourse which provided points of resistance. Karen was able to lead the Agency away from a psychological therapeutic focus toward social advocacy and activism through articulating a new mission, as is described in the next chapter. In the workshop I facilitated regarding changes in the not-for-profit sector, we talked about the growth in the Agency made possible through the funder-provider split and government contracting of social service work by community agencies. Paradoxically, the Agency was then deliberately resisting the managerialist discourse within which this contracting occurred. The very existence of the Centre was only possible because of our government's move to shift welfare provision into the community sector, a move often criticised as oppressive because of the neoliberal framework within which it is embedded.

In the early part of the inquiry, Karen and I spoke several times about her discomfort in being a manager, and *having 'power over' others*, and the discomfort of being both a woman and a manager. I shared with Karen, Judi Marshall's *Women managers: Travellers in a male world* (1984) and *Women managers moving on: Exploring career and life choices* (1995), both of which provided a context for understanding that discomfort, because both articulated the intertwining of mangerialism and Western masculinity. Over the time of the inquiry, Karen's discomfort became a form of reflexivity about her own subjectivity, through this kind of consciousness raising, together with developing alternative notions of power, and articulating the times when Karen's exercise of power as a woman manager allowed alternative subject positions for staff members and the women in the Centre.

2. Church-affiliation

The Agency was also located by its name and history as a Christian social service, within a century old tradition of church involvement in welfare services in Aotearoa New Zealand. There were a number of complexities around being located as a church-based agency at a time when increasing professionalisation of social work and counselling, and the growing strength of managerialism in the not-for-profit sector, all mandated the provision of secular social services. Secular social services were often presumed to be neutral and professional (in a similar way to the assumption of neutrality and efficiency in management practices) while faith based services were constructed as biased at the least, and oppressive at the worst, and often as unprofessional with their reliance on volunteers and charity. For this reason, Karen chose carefully the places in which she spoke as a Christian woman or about the work of the Agency as faith based. She was always aware of the assumption that the covert purpose of Christian-based social services was to convert people to Christianity, or in her words *to gather more scalps for Jesus*. She, and others in the Agency, resisted most strongly this construction of their work.

Thus, in providing service, or serving the women in the Centre, there was initially little mention of the faith basis of the work. And yet, after some time, a group of women started asking for *church* as part of the Centre. They said that one of the reasons they had come to the Centre was because of the Christian affiliation; they viewed it as a safe place to come, and wanted Christian spiritual practice to be part of the life of the Centre. Together with a few others, Karen established a small ministry team which provided services on a Sunday to those who wished to be involved. This 'service' was kept quite separate to the social service work of the regular routines of Monday to Friday, an indication of the requirement for social service to be located as primarily secular. Some of the ministry involved using the gospel as a set of stories about social justice, as is described further in the next chapter.

We noticed, sometimes with some irony, the intersections of ethnicity with the kinds of subject positions available in this social service setting. Many Maori

have argued for the indivisibility of spiritual, cultural and welfare practices, and the interrelatedness of physical, spiritual, psychological, environmental and cultural wellbeing.[39] Currently, when social services are identified as honouring and working appropriately for Maori they often include regular prayer and other spiritual practices. It was considered fundamental that Maori social service workers would work with cultural and spiritual wellbeing, while for Pakeha social service workers to acknowledge their Christian faith was often risky. Hence, for example, Maori protocol required opening gatherings with karakia in te reo Maori[40], while, unless the gathering was in an explicitly Christian setting, opening with Christian prayer was considered inappropriate, because it trampled the rights of those who are not Christian, was colonising, and patriarchal.

Sometimes Karen described the church as *the albatross around her neck*, not only because of the way in which others positioned her as 'do-gooding', colonising, oppressive Christian charity worker, but paradoxically, because she sometimes experienced the practices of the church in those very ways herself. In one of our conversations, she described the Christian affiliation and discourse, as *a very dirty towel for washing the feet of the poor.* Nevertheless, the Christian gospel and a number of relationships with key figures in the Anglican church, also provided inspiration for her work and a language of transformation and social justice, within which she located herself. They provided part of the discourse of resistance described in the next chapter, and alternative subject positions. Being affiliated to the Anglican church, with its three tikanga structure, national Social Justice Commission, and activism against poverty, also provided a location from which to work against poverty.

In some settings within the Agency Karen chose to be more open about the basis of the work in the Christian gospel. For example, staff members could choose to

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[39] The contemporary Maori model of health, Te Whare Tapa Whā, for example, compares health to the four walls of a house, which together provide strength and symmetry (Durie, 1994). The four walls are taha wairua (the spiritual side), taha hinengaro (thoughts and feelings), taha tinana (the physical side), and taha whanau (family).

[40] Karakia are sometimes Christian prayers and sometimes invocations drawing on traditional Maori spirituality.

attend a brief communion service every Friday morning if they wished and a Christian chaplain was available to staff and to women in the Centre. There was no requirement to be Christian to work in the Agency, but its location as a Christian agency also meant that some people chose to work there because of their own location as Christian. And a few did locate themselves as evangelical and fundamental Christians, sometimes viewing the women as fallen souls in need of redemption through confession and conversion. This particular construction sometimes paralleled the psychological and therapeutic constructions of the women as damaged and in need of psychological healing, and we noted the move of Christian ministers toward counselling practices as a way of relating to other people.

For Karen there was always a tension in locating herself out of alternative Christian theologies, and providing space for others to locate themselves from within a more fundamental theology, from which those people then might also dismiss all other possible interpretations of Christianity or the validity of any other spiritual belief. In some of our conversations we talked about the individualism of fundamental Christianity, and, as described earlier, alternative theologies. Again with some irony, we noted the usefulness of the position of manager to claim the Agency as a safe place for spiritual exploration of all kinds, while at the same time acknowledging the Christian tradition from within which the Agency emanated.

We talked also about the intersections between economic rationalism and church affiliation, noting the increasing emphasis on managerial perspectives on governance in the Boards of church-affiliated agencies. While in the past, such Boards had been seen as providing Christian oversight, church-agency relationship, and/or compassionate support for the work of a church-affiliated agency, increasingly Boards were being called, and/or claiming the right, to govern the finances, strategic direction and employees of the agency. We also noted the ways in which managerialist aims of effectiveness and efficiency were combined with Christian resistance to consumption and models of charity, to ensure that the Agency was kept impoverished, in Karen's view, in a similar organisational process to the process which occurred for impoverished

individuals, families and whanau served by the Agency. The Agency was to remain poor through partial government funding and reliance on philanthropic grants and donations, but well-managed, efficient and effective, just as the mothers in the Centre were to remain poor through inadequate state benefits, but were to be thrifty competent mothers. Part of the resistance to this impoverishment was to talk about a theology of abundance, as is described in the next chapter.

The Agency's location as a Christian faith based organisation intersected with discourses of the not-for-profit sector, social justice, managerialism, psychology, gender, class and ethnicity, in complex ways, with tremendous potential for both unjust and just action.

D. An example: four eggs and two coffees for breakfast

To illustrate the kind of analysis which became possible for some staff members within the action inquiry, I have chosen to write here a brief narrative of one small event which occurred while I was in the Agency, and then to examine the ways such an event might be read, the subject positions made available through particular discourses, and the ways power operated through different interactions between staff members and women who lived at the Centre[41].

[41] This story is also used in a forthcoming article in the *Journal of Organisational Change Management* (Gatenby & Hume, in press).

Four eggs and two coffees for breakfast on Thursday

On Thursday, Carly, one of the women living at Cross Rose Centre with her two children, woke, showered, dressed, helped the children get dressed, checked they had breakfast, made their school lunches and waved goodbye to them as the Cross Rose van took them off to school.

Then she went into the kitchen, fried four eggs, piled them on four pieces of toast, made herself a strong black coffee, sat down and ate her breakfast. Then she made herself another coffee, and drank that.

A number of readings of this event within particular discourses are presented below, followed by comments about the assumptions and subject positions within the discourses. These readings are not the only possibilities and there are many intersections and contradictions both within and between the discourses available. No matter how much I write, it is impossible to cover the complexities of just this one small event. I present these readings not as an indication that the discourses in which they are embedded are inherently bad, but to show the kinds of assumptions underlying each, the provision of certain subject positions, and the limitations of each. In all cases, the discourses also sometimes provided opportunities for transformation.

1. From within psychological and therapeutic discourses

Women at Cross Rose Centre drink too much coffee and eat too much food. They use coffee as a sedative instead of dealing with their real troubles. They need more counselling so that they can resolve their emotional issues.

Carly tends to show a lack of self-discipline and often treats herself to extra food. This is an indication of her psychological state. In this instance, Carly was raped as a ten year old by her uncle. When she told her mother about it two years later, her mother sent her away to boarding school. Consequently Carly has trouble relating to all men and to her daughter who is almost ten now. She needs intensive therapy with a

skilled therapist to deal with the emotional trauma she carries so that she can form positive relationships and control her addictive and inappropriate behaviours.

The women in Cross Rose Centre need to learn and demonstrate self-discipline and limit themselves to three cups of coffee a day.

Comments

From within these discourses, Carly is located primarily as a 'case' or a 'client' whose life is most likely to be transformed through therapeutic intervention. She is located as psychologically damaged. Women who are deemed to be damaged psychologically in ways such as Carly is, are often positioned as mothers likely to parent inappropriately.

Social service work within this discourse is primarily individual counselling or psychological work, whether or not it is carried out by therapists or social workers. The position from which staff work is provided through the necessity for experts who know the psychological causes of behaviours and can therefore provide appropriate therapeutic interventions. Power operates primarily through the right of counsellors and psychologists to 'know' the psychological state of the women, the mechanisms of counselling, and through women themselves believing that their lives will be good only when they have received appropriate counselling.

Resistance within this discourse happens in a number of ways, particularly through engaging with issues of power/knowledge in the relationship between client and counsellor. Some of the women in the Centre demonstrated regularly their resistance to psychopathological definitions of themselves and to any sense of requirement that they receive counselling, often by simply not turning up to appointments or by refusing to be counselled by certain counsellors.

In academic discourses of psychology, resistance has occurred primarily within deconstructive and narrative psychology. Parker (1999), for example, argues that psychological knowledge is presented as a set of neutral tools to be used only by

experts dispensing help for others, and as essential in defining problems for which psychologists then provide solutions. Noting the contribution of feminist theory, he argues for a critical concern which is not about finding the correct standpoint, but understanding how we come to stand where we are. From this position, a concern with justice in therapy is intertwined with a concern for social justice in the world that has made therapy necessary. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the Family Centre in Wellington has also argued for 'just therapy' approaches (Waldegrave & Tamasese, 1993).

2. From within various management discourses

> Coffee costs a great deal (actually so do eggs) and Cross Rose Centre can't afford the cost of so much coffee if staff are to be expected to manage the budget on the limited funding available. We need a weekly system for managing the budget and a system for evening out the food consumption over the week.
>
> CYFS only partially funds the operating costs of the Agency and Cross Rose Centre is a community organisation with limited resources. Staff members are morally bound to manage those resources as efficiently as possible. The Agency is accountable to the government and charitable funders who provide our funding.
>
> CYFS have required that staff members set three monthly goals as part of our strategy with Carly, which at the next audit will be reviewed to see if she is making progress, as an indicator that we are achieving the outcomes required in our contract. Carly's effective management of herself will demonstrate our effective management of the women, the Centre and the budget.

Comments

This discourse positions the women as the recipients of effective management and as clients or customers of services which cost money to provide. They are required to learn how to manage their lives and behaviour more effectively, to

manage their children, and to manage their grief and trauma. Staff members are positioned as managers of the clients/customers and resources, and as people themselves being managed through the hierarchy of managers in the organisation.

In managerialist discourses, the techniques of strategic management are presented as a neutral set of knowledge and practices arising out of the right to control according to apparently rational and objective principles and truths (Kaboolian, 1998; Knights, 1992). Managerialism also occurs through viewing the identity, health and wellbeing of people as both a psychological principle and at the same time a managerial principle of efficiency. The 'science' of psychiatry was moved through psychology, and human resource management, to organisations as a means of 'managing effectively' (Miller & Rose, 2001/1988).

Management is conceived as a generic practice perfected by the private sector (Kaboolian, 1998). Through reforms of the public service in the 1980s and 1990s, managerial principles became the mode of operation of power in the public sector (Boston, Martin, Pallot, & Walsh, 1996) and then were transferred via managerial contractual power to the not-for-profit sector, particularly in social service organisations reliant on government funding to provide services previously provided by government itself (Deakin, 2001).

In the Centre, a number of intersections between discourses of psychology and managerialism emerged. Contracting with CYFS to provide social service involved being required to both manage appropriately and to provide psychological interventions, particularly when that same government agency had statutory powers in regard to the care and custody of children. On the other hand, managerial techniques regarding the employment of staff were also sometimes useful in resisting the power of psychologists and counsellors to 'know' the women in the Centre.

3. From within Western health and medical discourses

> Eating fried, high cholesterol food and drinking too much coffee is likely to compromise the physical health of Carly and of her children, since she is likely to serve similar food to her children.
>
> Women in the Centre need to be taught how to look after their health and the health of their children. They especially need to be taught the basics of healthy eating and the value of exercise. Staff can tell when the women of the Centre are doing well, because they start to take care of their appearance. They might lose a little weight, dress nicely and use make-up appropriately. Maori women in particular tend to be overweight, and need to understand the risk of diabetes and other diseases in their lives and take extra care with their physical health.

Comments

This kind of discourse positions the women in the Centre as bodies, as embodying 'health risks', and makes them the target of various health promotion activities to be provided largely by the staff of the Centre. The women tend to be located as not knowing about health with the underlying assumption that once they have this knowledge, they will change their behaviours. Sometimes the discourse appeared neutral or affirming in regard to gender difference because of its focus on physical health, but functioned to discipline women about their appearance.

We noticed that often health discourses would act together with therapeutic and management discourses to position the women as at risk, and needing managing, through teaching them to manage their own health and wellbeing, using the knowledge of experts about psychology and physical health. Some staff took up positions, or were positioned as those experts.

4. From within liberal feminist and human rights discourses

> Carly, like other women in the Centre, needs to be empowered to make the right choices for her own wellbeing and the wellbeing of her children. Women like Carly have not had the same access as some others in our society to education and employment.
>
> Staff in the Centre treat all women as equals and can empower other women. Taking care of the human rights of Carly and each of her children will provide the basis for their wellbeing. All people are equal but the safety of the children here is paramount.

Comments

Within these discourses, it is often assumed that access to education and employment can provide the means by which women can transform their lives. Within some versions of these discourses the women in the Centre are positioned as competitors in a market place, which given the right circumstances and uptake of opportunities, will provide fair and equitable outcomes for them. Conversely, if the women do not make the 'right choices' once opportunities are available, then they are likely to be positioned as irrational or inadequate.

In a number of academic fields the difficulties of the language of empowerment have been discussed, including critical psychology (Parker, 1999), radical social work (Pease & Fook, 1999) and poststructural and feminist research (Ristock & Pennell, 1996). Empowerment is supposed to imply a handing over of power from one to another, yet being the one to do the handing over and the defining of who is powerless, is in itself a power relation. Ironically, the power relation is hidden by the language of empowerment. The discourse in this context positions the women in the Centre as powerless and the staff as powerful, though egalitarian.

Human rights approaches to justice tend to separate individuals as the point at which assessment of just outcomes should be made. Both liberal feminism and liberal perspectives on human rights rely on the idea that people are autonomous,

rational, self-determining beings. Those who critique these discourses argue that they artificially abstract people from both their physical bodies and their social relationships and fail to take account of caring relationships and the dependency of human life (Bryson, 1999).

The language of human rights was often useful in arguing for different outcomes for women in the Centre, particularly when staff positioned themselves as social advocates for the women or sometimes in resistance to managerialism. However, Karen and I also talked about the limitations of the human rights and liberal feminist discourses for work which valued the building of connections and relationships between people.

5. Using this discourse approach

The event described is just one small story. There were other events which were much more significant and which could equally be read in a number of ways with very significant effects on the possibilities for the women and children who lived in the Centre. Because of their greater significance for the individuals involved, they are also more risky to write about.

All of the discourses described above, and many others, operated in complex and intersecting ways in regard to the women and work of the Centre. Through the action inquiry, some staff became more aware of the discourses they and the women in the Centre were positioned in and positioned themselves in. Some became aware that the kind of event described above could also be read in other ways, that we choose what 'knowledge' about other people we will foreground, and that that makes available different subject positions and hence different possibilities in people's lives.

For example, Donna, remembering her own upbringing in what she noted is now called poverty, commented on the sign of wellbeing which having several eggs for lunch was in her family. She read the event as a sign of wellbeing for the woman in the Centre, and those discourses which seek to discipline such actions as arising out of class and Pakeha domination, particularly since Pakeha women

seem to be so obsessed with being slim. In such a reading she claimed a place of resistance for herself and the women in the Centre to positions of inadequacy. Another staff member might read Carly's care for her children before making her own breakfast as an indication of her effective mothering. Carly is thus positioned as an able and caring mother. Sitting down to eat breakfast might be read as an example of the provision of abundance, in resistance to poverty, by the Centre. Having a full belly could be a sign of wellness, as could taking the time to eat breakfast. Perhaps, Carly sat down to breakfast with a group of other women in the Centre, in a time of sharing food and talk which contributed to the building of relationships and therefore a sense of community among the women, which might contribute to their wellbeing. Or perhaps she was simply exercising power by resisting attempts to monitor her diet.

This kind of alternative reading of just one small incident became part of the inquiry, particularly for Karen and I and for other staff to varying degrees. In the next Chapter I explore the alternative discourse which developed more broadly in the Agency, in resistance to a number of the discourses described above, and related changes in practice and language.

E. Western neoliberalism

Despite the risk of creating a grand narrative, I want to draw together the various critiques presented in this chapter, as part of a large discursive formation often called Western neoliberalism. There were a number of related neoliberal discourses, specifically discourses of individualism, managerialism, human rights, consumerism, psychology, and health, which were very powerful in the social service sector at this time, and which we believed worked together to limit the subject positions available to the women who lived at the Centre and the staff who worked with them, and therefore limited the possibilities for transformation. Even the apparent need for transformation can be read as coming out of these discourses. Gender, race and class were threaded through all of these discourses,

creating and maintaining a range of possibilities and impossibilities for women in this place, at this time.

All of these discourses rely on the individual as the site of analysis, change and responsibility. This is a particularly Western individualism, contrasting with the collectivism of many indigenous cultures and mitigating against the claims of indigenous peoples through apparently neutral and unarguable truths about people and organisations. The individual at the heart of this individualism has a fixed and immutable identity, is free to choose and to consume, and responsible for her own plight or journey to fulfillment. This is a particular form of individualism arising at this time, enacted in the minute by minute interactions of our communities, and different to earlier forms of Western individualism (Bauman, 2001). However, current forms of individualism have emerged from early forms of Christianity which articulated each individual as having a direct and essential relationship with God (Starck, 2002). In a church affiliated social service, discourses of Christianity overlap, maintain and sometimes resist current forms of Western individualism.

In contrast to the broad discursive formation of neoliberalism, some staff members in the Agency developed further their articulation of, and intent to draw from discourses of biculturalism, community as relationship, communion, conversation and connection, radical Christian theology, and social justice. Their resistance to neoliberalism is described in Chapter 11.

Chapter 11

Articulating resistance, changing practice, re-naming and re-focusing

A. Introduction: a discourse of resistance

In the analysis in the last chapter, I described ways in which members of the Agency resisted positioning the women in Cross Rose Centre as mad, bad or sad, or with singular identities, resisted some forms of expert knowledge about the women, and resisted a number of neoliberal discourses as dominant framework for their work. In this chapter I draw those examples together as part of a broader articulation of resistance to the dominant neoliberal discourses of managerialism, psychology, human rights and consumerism, and the intentional articulation of an alternative discourse of 'justice through service', 'building community', and 'inquiry'. I also discuss the influences of the poststructural and action inquiry approach on the work of the Agency and the changes in practice which developed over the time of the inquiry.

A significant part of the inquiry became articulating both the dominant neoliberal discourses and a local discourse of resistance. Some of the language of this discourse was already present. For example, the work of the Centre and the impetus for the development of Te Ara Hou had always been described as *building community*, in resistance to the individualising tendencies of neoliberal discourses. However, over the time of the inquiry, we became more articulate about why this discourse of resistance was important, how the key terms within it were interwoven, and the ways they were lived in the Agency. We also became more intentional about the creation of an alternative discourse, aware of the complexities of doing that, and conscious of the subject positions made available for both the women in the Centre and the staff of the Agency.

The most formal signal of an intentional change came through a re-writing of the organisation's mission and values statements, which are included in Appendix 8, and the change of name from Waikato Anglican Social Services to Anglican Action. Karen led the re-writing, with contributions from a number of other key people and Board approval. She then gathered together all of the organisational policy and procedure documents, bound them together as a book with the mission and values statements at the front, and presented them as a gift in a kete[42] to each staff member at a half day workshop and retreat for staff. The front page of the book bears the following whakatauki[43] in both Maori and English.

I runga i te kī	*What is most important?*
He aha te mea nui	*It is people, people, people.*
He tangata, he tangata, he tangata	
Nā koi nei te wero	
	We should not create policies that are
Kaua e hangai he ture	*like the fishing net*
Pera i te kupenga ika	*that snares and strangles*
He here hopu	
Engari, me pērā i te nekeneke tai hei	*but like the surging tide*
ārahi.	*that uplifts and carries forward.*

This whakatauki is well known in our country. Often just the first part is used to claim the importance of the wellbeing of people above all else, and in resistance to policies which seem to value other things. Including the rest of the whakatauki signified an awareness of the systems, the policies and procedures, through which power is exercised. It acknowledged that the policies and procedures book too was both a technique of power and a resistance to other techniques. Including a whakatauki and its English translation also demonstrated

[42] A kete is a traditional Maori woven flax bag.

[43] A whakatauki is a Maori proverb or saying often passed on as part of whakapapa (genealogy passed on orally from generation to generation).

a valuing of Maori wisdom and the commitment of the Agency to honouring the Treaty of Waitangi, as is outlined in the values statement and discussed later in this chapter. Other aspects of the re-written mission and values statement are threaded through the discussion below.

A series of interwoven terms emerged as significant in the discourse of resistance, which I have grouped around three related concepts, though the classification oversimplifies the relationships among the terms. The first concept emerges through the Agency's mission statement, *justice through service*, and includes several key terms: social justice, action, service, gospel led and faith based, solidarity, and Treaty led. The second concept includes a clustre of terms around the idea that the work of Cross Rose Centre was primarily about *building community*: community, communion, connection, relationship. The third concept is the broad notion of inquiry as a way of working and being in the Agency, which included interplay of ideas about conversation, discourses, resistance and subjectivity. These three clustres are described below.

B. Justice through service

The organisation's mission statement had been *justice through service* for some time. Over the time of the inquiry there were many conversations which made this a living concept. The inquiry was an opportunity to pay attention to the ways the mission was constructed, enacted and re-constructed in the minute by minute interaction that is the work of the Agency. In many ways, all of the discussion of the last chapter was about the construction of justice and injustice through the work. In the next sections of this chapter, I discuss the deliberate building of a set of ideas, subject positions, actions and interactions around the concept of *justice through service*.

1. Justice

The Agency's mission was expressed as *justice through service*, and part of this inquiry was clearly about how justice, or social justice as the term most frequently used, was enacted through the Agency's work. Loizou (1997) suggests that we ask about the ways the concept of justice is used. In the Agency, social justice was to be a guiding value, though the term was used in resistance to the kinds of social justice imagined through neoliberal social and economic policy. The vision statements were expressed this way:

- *To make a positive difference in the community, collaborating, to challenge social injustice and poverty.*
- *To offer individuals and families options to enhance their wellbeing.*

At the particular time of the inquiry, injustice was primarily constructed as poverty, racism, and other outcomes of neoliberal social and economic policies and techniques of power. For the women in the Centre, the specifics of these injustices were policies, practices and subject positions which limited their opportunities to move out of poverty, to care for their children, and to change their lives or take on other subject positions. Being constructed as, and limited to being mad, sad or bad was an injustice.

Valuing and working for justice also signalled a belief in the possibility of transformation. Karen and I talked and laughed a number of times about our different perspectives on just how much transformation is possible. I am inclined to describe justice work as the search for those 'moments of social justice' described by Fine (1994), thus implying that justice is not completely achievable or stable over time. Karen, however, expressed sometimes her complete dissatisfaction with the idea of **moments** of justice and wanted to be able to talk about complete and achievable transformation. Foucault's memorable quote regarding the dangers of all discourses and systems resonated for me:

> My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we

always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to hyper- and pessimistic activism. (Foucault, in Rabinow, 1997, p.256)

Karen wanted also to set beside this a belief in goodness and miracle, a sense of faith and purity, though she also used the following metaphor of light and dark on many occasions to describe the complexity of justice and injustice:

> *I believe that we are constantly engaged in a dynamic dance among lights and shadows and that attention to this dance and reflection upon where we find ourselves located at any given moment, is what keeps us attentive to our ability to create justices and injustices, liberations and prisons, and all the places in between.*[44]

Holding this tension seemed to me to be a significant part of each of us as individuals, and part of our relationship as academic and practitioner, and a significant commitment in the work of the Agency.

2. Service

Justice was of course inextricably linked with *service* in the mission statement, and we talked throughout the inquiry about the ways the term service was used and the tensions surrounding and emanating from it. Changing the name of the Agency so that it no longer included the words 'social service' was a deliberate resistance to the managerialist and professional caring location of service, which situated the women in the Centre as clients or customers and community based welfare organisations as providers of consumable service. In the context of government contracting, being a 'social service' had connotations of providing services primarily to funders, rather than focusing on service and care for the women in the Centre or other people the Agency served. In the values statement, the Agency is clearly located within the not-for-profit sector and Karen both

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[44] The description is drawn from the keynote paper Karen and I gave at the Conference of the Australia New Zealand Third Sector Research Society in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand (Gatenby & Hume, 2002).

articulated the differences between this sector and government and private sectors, and drew on those aspects of discourses about the not-for-profit sector which focus on participatory democracy:

> *Non profit* [not-for-profit] *organisations are a unique form of social organising. We are neither failed businesses nor mini-bureaucracies.*
>
> *No matter the technical, personal or other qualities of the people involved, government organisations carry with them the status of statutory power. This makes it more difficult for people who are disempowered through deprivation, multiple poverty issues and alienation from "the System" to engage with these organisations. In a similar way, no matter how satisfied people are with commercial organisations, invariably the question arises whether such an organisation will continue to be concerned about them if their custom is no longer commercially viable.*
>
> *For this reason if we allow our relationships with the people we serve to be dominated by considerations of power or commercial viability, we will lose the essential value of* ***service****.*
>
> *We cannot ignore the power relationships when we hold resources or control decisions that are important in other people's lives. Nor can we ignore the financial viability of our work, but we are committed to ensuring the value and practice of service is always pre-eminent in all our decision-making.*
>
> *For government organisations, relationships are essentially based on obligation. For commercial organisations, relationships are essentially based on transaction. For non profit organisations, relationships are essentially based on commitment, and this is a commitment to shared values.*

This is what makes us unique as a non profit organisation - we come together of our own volition to address a need, to serve, to seek justice and co-create a renewed world. It is our commitment to these over-arching values which holds us together and makes us who we are.

...

Non profit organisations have a wider role in society beyond actual services or programmes we provide. We are as much about participation as provision, as much about citizenship as service. We are agents of participatory democracy.

Non profit organisations are uniquely located in the social schema in that they can act as catalysts for civic action in response to social injustice and be the voice from the margins because of their very location there.

The workshop I facilitated for staff regarding social and economic policy and the community sector, along with wider debates and discussions about the sector and its role, provided an alternative discourse from which staff in the Agency might draw in resisting managerialism as it was enacted through the language of social service provision.

Staff members were also well aware of the connotations of oppressive Christian charity in *service*. However, Karen and others wished to claim service as a Christian term implying care and nurture of each other, and solidarity with those who are poor or suffering, as is explored further below. This claim for the term *service* was also in resistance to the professionalisation of 'social services' through the involvement of social workers, counsellors and others locating themselves, and being located by others, within psychological discourses, and thus acting as experts in the lives of the women in the Centre.

3. Action

Resistance was about both resisting the dominance of neoliberalism and the development of an alternative discourse. As Barraket (1999) experienced in her doctoral research with a community based collective, Karen and I discussed a

number of times the paralysing effect of what Karen called *endless critique*. Karen and others were determined that, notwithstanding their capacity and ability to critique any discourses from which they might work, they would still choose to *take action* and to *do the work*. Action in this sense is not the direct opposite of theory, but a choice to be deliberate about and involved in the construction of the world around us, and specifically to be involved in relationships with people who are poor, perhaps unwell, or in difficult circumstances. The focus on 'action' within the action research discourse paralleled this commitment to be active in the Agency about social justice issues, as was indicated in the name change of the Agency to Anglican Action towards the end of this inquiry.

In later writing[45], Karen sums up the discourse of resistance by way of introducing the name change:

> *In a work that seems to have been overwhelmed by the demands and expectations found in the neoliberal discourse of managerialism particularly, it is easy to slip into the TINA[46] syndrome. I notice that we struggle to maintain our resistance in the face of such a dominating power. However by intentionally building a discourse of resistance we maintain our critical edge and can know again that it is not all inevitable.*
>
> *We choose therefore to speak of Cross Rose as a community of families, as ourselves as companions in that journey, of relationships and conversations, seeing ourselves in the women and them in us, removing any talk of women as clients and therefore refusing to position ourselves as paid experts. We maintain the talk of solidarity, social justice, and activism.*
>
> *As an agency we attempt to examine the talk, the naming, the describing,*

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[45] As above.

[46] TINA stands for 'There Is No Alternative'. Kelsey (2002) urges people in this country to reject the idea that 'there is no alternative' to neoliberal economic and social policy and shows in a number of ways that there are alternatives.

which maintains a status quo of injustice and look for opportunities to express something more just. These values lie behind the renaming of the Agency to Anglican Action, an expression of our determination to be active in our pursuit, to be constantly engaged in the tensions and dynamism of resistance, and to fully participate in the co creation of our world.

The re-naming of the Agency at the beginning of 2002 was a significant marker of an intentional shift in perspective which had been taking place and which was now being more clearly articulated. The 'action' was the intentional resistance and determination to construct something different to the dominant discourses and the limited subject positions they made available. The re-naming drew on both the 'action' of action research and the 'action' of choosing to work from discourses which enabled critiques of social structures or discourses, and their relationship to poverty and hardship, rather than discourses which located explanations for poverty in inadequate individuals. The inquiry legitimised, among other things, Karen's social justice passion and leadership, and the social justice intent of the Agency, which emerged in the new name.

Part of being committed to action was also constructed as deliberate resistance to working only with individuals and families, as the values statement sets out:

We see the relationship with the wider community not only in terms of what can be gained from it but also what can be added into it. Our purpose is to enhance the community by supporting people through challenging structural and systemic injustice which results in multiple poverty traps, deprivation, violence and abuse of people.

It is too simplistic to locate all of the responsibility for change within the individual. It is important that we understand the wider context and external pressures that individuals and families can by oppressed by.

Our agency, because of its justice focus, will seek to be part of any public debate about justice and injustice through submissions, attendance at conferences, public forums and discussions.

Such commitments were enacted in a number of ways, through a growing focus on being part of wider debates in the variety of ways described in Chapter 8, and through initiating particular projects. For example, after witnessing a number of the women in the Centre struggling with banking systems which exacerbated their financial difficulties, we were able to involve a theology student in a research practicum in which she gathered information and identified the issues. The issues were discussed with staff in a number of other social service agencies, and they, together with women in the Centre, met with staff from several banks, wrote to the Banking Ombudsman and involved the media in several stories about unfair banking practices, some of which were changed so that there was less disadvantage for people with relatively little money needing banking services.

4. Faith based and gospel led

The mission of the Agency, *justice through service*, combined notions of social justice and Christian service. In Karen's leadership of the Agency she drew on and located herself within a particular discourse of Christianity which intertwined with other aspects of the discourse of resistance which developed in the Agency. Within this local and situated theology the gospel was constructed as primarily a set of stories about social justice and the possibility of alternative economic and social systems. The people in these stories were constructed as ordinary everyday people: *nobodies, just like you and me*, as Karen said to the women in the Centre who had come to her seeking church as part of their community. The gospel stories also provided an alternative to the language of psychology and management as various truths about the nature of individuals and relationships. Talking about the sanctity of the human spirit has different possibilities to talking about the psyche of individuals. In Christianity, Jesus can be a powerful symbol of an ethic of compassion and a challenge to authoritarian

uses of power (McNiff & Whitehead, 2000). As Lyon (2000) points out, religion and discourses of spirituality can be significant cultural resources.

A radical divinity of all people was also fundamental to this theology, as expressed by Karen: *we are all equally precious to God, every heartbeat is infinitely important to the universe.* Just as individuals were constructed as sacred and precious, so too were relationships: *the divine is in and between us.* Karen drew on the work of inspirational writers such as John O'Donohue (1997) for alternative discourses about spirituality and divinity, using for example, Celtic wisdom about the divine within relationships. Further, social justice was completely interconnected with relationships. Karen also drew on the work of local theologians such as Chris Marshall who were also active in social justice work: "justice is a matter of right relationships".[47] For Karen, having relationships with women in the Centre which involved spiritual exploration provided one of a number of alternative subject positions out of which they might relate to each other, other than as manager and clients. There was, of course, also a tension to hold in understanding that those subject positions could not completely disappear. For Karen, being **invited** by women in the Centre to talk about faith was crucial, as was leaving a great deal of space for the women to choose to continue or not to continue their conversations.

In the re-written mission and values statement, Karen clearly links the Agency to the Anglican Church:

> *As a group we were created by and have been nurtured by the Anglicans of the Waikato diocese. We acknowledge this historical bond and would seek to retain and strengthen it.*
>
> ...
>
> ***What it means to be a church based agency affiliated to the Anglican church in the Waikato.***

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[47] This quote comes from a tape recording of Chris Marshall, "Follow justice and only justice", Hamilton Central Baptist Church, nd.

The Agency was created by the Anglicans of the Waikato. Although it has autonomy through its own Trust Board, it has a direct link to, and intimate relationship with the Bishop of Waikato and the Anglican community. The values and principles upon which the Agency was created are a direct expression of the Christian gospel as expressed within the Anglican communion. The imperative of this gospel is to pursue justice and offer compassion through committed service to all people without prejudice. This creates the heartbeat in the Agency.

This text marked a deliberate *reclaiming of Christianity in secular social services*, as Karen later described it. Figuring out that secular neoliberal discourses were just as oppressing and colonising as Christian discourses of social service had been and could be, and seeing the relationships between the two discourses, provided impetus to search for what might be possible through working from alternative Christian discourses which might also resist neoliberalism.

The title Anglican remained in the new name for the Agency[48] and indeed not long after this inquiry ended formally, a group of Franciscan brothers came to live on site at Te Ara Hou, some of whom then became voluntary staff members in the Agency. One aspect of the inquiry was this re-affirming of Christian values as at *the heart of the work*. The work of the Centre had been developed publicly as primarily secular, since discourses about Pakeha social services located staff associated with church-affiliated agencies as having to prove that they were not proselytising, nor 'do-gooding', nor racist. However, noticing and articulating the dominant neoliberal discourses described in the last chapter and determining to resist them provided a position from which a local theology could be articulated. Staff in the Agency became more articulate about the Agency also being a place for spiritual exploration for them and for the women in the Centre. Paradoxically discourses of anti-colonisation and biculturalism provided one base for this for the Maori women living in the Centre.

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[48] This is in contrast to some other church affiliated agencies who had adopted secular names.

Re-affirming this position as Christian agency was not without its own tensions of course. As much as Karen and others were locating the Agency alongside the church, they were also mindful of the potential for oppression through discourses of Christianity. Discussion about Christianity with the women in the Centre included consciousness raising about the ways in which church and doctrine had been and can be oppressive and colonising.

Feminist theology informed Karen's, my and others' perspectives, particularly through providing a critique of and struggle against oppression of women through religious doctrine, and reform and reconstruction of such doctrine (Burn, 2000). Occasional discussions among women employed in the Agency traversed gender oppression intertwined through church, state, community and domestic life. The alternative imaginary of the divine provided by feminist theologians, also provided for a critique of exclusive Christianity and the notion of human beings as a 'cursed people' in need of individual repentance and absolution:

> feminists will tend to stress the spiritual and ethical dimensions of human existence in relation to the divine or spiritual, over and above the discussion of the nature of God's existence in itself or as, perhaps a justification for human obedience. By using the word 'spiritual' in this context, they go beyond a disembodied or non-material realm. This different view of spirituality characteristically incorporates human desire for emancipation and transcendence through the material and erotic realms of human existence rather than through their exclusion by ascetic practices or body-denying scales of value. And correspondingly by using the term 'ethical' in this context, feminists emphasise the justification of moral language in terms of fundamental values of equality, love and justice, understanding that these can equally be embodied in material and erotic forms that recognise our communal interdependence as human beings. (Jasper, 2001, p.159)

Karen's challenge to members of the local Anglican Church was always to become *more relevant* to the range of people encountered through social service work. Often she located herself on the margins of the Anglican Church. She

argued clearly that churches, and therefore Christians, should be involved in politics and social and economic policy. Her articulation of this position led to her being asked to be on the oversight committee for the Social Justice Commissioner employed by the Anglican church nationally. This national involvement also meant being involved in occasional conversations with the Prime Minister or other members of Cabinet about social and economic policy. As part of this inquiry we were able to discuss beforehand what kinds of comments might be useful in that context and talk afterwards about the meetings and what was being constructed, particularly by the current Labour government, members of which had made a point of talking with church leaders. Karen and I were also increasingly asked to meet and talk with people from other church affiliated agencies or to speak publicly about the critique of neoliberalism we had articulated and the ways Christians might resist such discourses.

Over the time of the inquiry Karen also chose to locate the Agency within a theology of abundance, in resistance to the notion of the Agency as an impoverished community organisation. This was in part a determination to understand and value the resources available, as the values statement makes clear:

> *We are constrained by our funding resources but not contained by them. All of our funding is derived through donations and grants and we, along with the many people we serve, live in the light and shadow of poverty. We are called therefore to show even greater responsibility and stewardship for the resources that are gifted to us.*

It was also a resistance to consumerism and a refusal to be contained by the subject position of impoverished church agency or incompetent community manager of funding. It was a theology which drew on the idea that God's creation can provide abundantly for all:

> As Christians we are called to share in God's mission of justice, peace, and respect for all Creation and to seek for all humanity the abundant life which God intends. (John, 1998)

The values statement also indicates a sense of solidarity with those individuals and families who are positioned as impoverished and a determination to construct both for them and for the Agency, other positions which acknowledge the wealth and abundance of their lives, to stand alongside those critiques of poverty.

4. Christian solidarity

In the clustre of concepts to do with *justice through service*, solidarity also emerged as important. This solidarity was of the kind remembered by hooks (2000):

> showing solidarity with the poor was essential spiritual work; a way to learn the true meaning of community and enact the sharing of resources that would necessarily dismantle hierarchy and difference. (p.30)
>
> Solidarity with the poor is not the same as empathy. Many people feel sorry for the poor or identify with their suffering yet do nothing to alleviate it. All too often people of privilege engage in forms of spiritual materialism where they seek recognition of their goodness by helping the poor. And they proceed in the efforts without changing their contempt and hatred of poverty. Genuine solidarity with the poor is rooted in the recognition that interdependency sustains the life of the planet. That includes the recognition that the fate of the poor both locally and globally will to a grave extent determine the quality of life for those who are lucky enough to have class privilege. (p.130)

Karen described God as being *the God for the underprivileged.* The interdependency invoked in this notion of solidarity was discussed several times, sometimes during tea breaks, sometimes during staff meetings. At one point, one of the social advocates used the following text as a discussion starter and then pinned it up on the wall of the shared office:

> *If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time, but if your liberation is tied up with mine then we can work together. (anonymous Aboriginal woman)*

Solidarity was about reciprocity and mutuality. It was invoked as the opposite to oppression which occurs through the 'impossibility of mutuality' described in Chapter 10. Solidarity was used as a term which contrasted with popular ideas of Christian charity as patronising and oppressive. Solidarity was also used to resist the dichotomy of giving and receiving (or helper and helped) and the patronage of giving and forgiving.

Young (1997) suggests that empowering social services, in contrast to individualising social services, can raise the potential of social solidarity through consciousness raising and the possibility of collective action. In the Centre, Karen, Donna, Te Aopehirangi and others, increasingly wove social critique into their conversations with the women in the Centre. Te Aopehirangi, for example, ran a workshop with the women on social justice and oppression using Maori myth to explore the concepts and issues. Consciousness raising can mean that people can move from accepting the world as it is now to seeing human constructs as changeable and then begin to imagine something better (Young, 1997).

Solidarity in the Centre also included being in solidarity with those who were in pain. I remember a time when the staff and women in the Centre cried together because a mother had left her baby with the women, to return to her violent partner. Being willing to be with pain and suffering is itself a form of mutuality, and can be closely connected to consciousness raising; resistance often begins with people confronting pain (hooks, 1982). Pain and suffering can also lead to choosing the margin as a site of resistance. In Chapter 9, I described the ways in which painful events in my own life enabled a particular place to stand from which I could know different things about the care and protection of children.

The Agency shifted somewhat from the provision of counselling services to the provision of social advocacy as part of its resistance to locating the women in the Centre as psychological clients. Providing social advocates to work alongside women, often in their claims against statutory agencies, was an outcome of a focus on solidarity and community development rather than social service. Solidarity also sometimes included arguing for a mother to be able to care for her

children, and committing to sharing responsibility with her for their wellbeing. There were, of course, risks for the Agency in this kind of advocacy and solidarity. There was also some unhappiness and one or two staff members did choose to leave the Agency perhaps in part because it became more difficult for them to locate themselves as psychological experts in their work in the Agency.

5. Commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi

The re-written mission and values statement set out an analysis of the current position of Maori and a number of commitments in relation to the Treaty of Waitangi:

> ***What it means to be actively working out the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi***
> *The founding document that lies as the cornerstone to this nation is the Treaty of Waitangi. The Treaty provided for the protection of tangata whenua, their lands, ways of living, and cultural treasures under the sovereignty of the Crown.*
>
> *Throughout our short history as a nation under Crown rule, tangata whenua have been dislocated, oppressed and culturally emasculated by systems formed to engage in the western capitalist pursuit. This could be described as the single greatest injustice our society in Aotearoa must address today. The Treaty of Waitangi is central to our action in bringing about social justice for tangata whenua and therefore for all New Zealanders.*
>
> *As a result of the injustices of the past, and even now perpetuated through capitalist market pursuits, institutional and individual racism, Maori continue to be over represented in the populations that are in prison, in poverty, in poor health, with poor educational outcomes. These statistics can be directly attributed to the history of land confiscation, language and other cultural oppressions suffered by Maori for 150 years.*

This agency has a commitment to actively work for social justice in line with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. Consequently, we will:

- *consult with Maori in policy development within the agency*
- *commit to work in culturally appropriate and safe ways*
- *ensure all staff have a sound understanding and appreciation of the Treaty of Waitangi and are working out of its principles*
- *provide choice for Maori seeking our support by employing both Maori and Pakeha staff.*

...

We are committed to being Treaty partners.

This was a more formalised set of commitments than the Agency had had before, and a number of practices did change. Employing a Maori Coordinator for the Centre and a kaiawhina were significant steps. The women in the Centre were also able to attend programmes such as Waka Wairua, a kaupapa Maori programme on resolving conflict, and tikanga became a more regular part of the day to day life of the Agency. The resistance to these practices from a few staff members was also strong, as emerged in the workshop I facilitated on the Treaty. Formalising the commitments in writing was a clear message to some staff members.

At the time of the inquiry many health and welfare services were being established as iwi based, and 'for Maori by Maori' organisations, and the Agency had been challenged around the appropriateness of working with Maori and having resources to work with Maori. In a sense, alongside the commitments to the Treaty and aim to work against ongoing colonisation, staff members in the Agency were also resisting discourses which positioned Pakeha women as only able to have significant relationships with other Pakeha, and Maori women as only able to have significant relationships with other Maori. At this time there was considerable tension in holding both positions.

Many Maori have been resisting the systems of Western individualism for centuries. The communitarian discourse described in this chapter also has some

kinship with the collectivist priorities of Maori. For Maori, individual rights and responsibilities are indivisible from whanau, hapu and iwi welfare and the system of reciprocal obligations embedded within them (Ministry of Justice, 2001). In this country Te Ao Maori[49] provides a strong example of the possibility of different ways of thinking and being, perhaps with more influence than many Pakeha realise. Resisting Western individualism in the Centre often involved claiming the kind of collectivism constructed as fundamental to Te Ao Maori.

C. Building community

Prior to the inquiry the notion of *building community* was already embedded within the Agency. However through the inquiry, a number of other key terms linked to the notion of community became part of the resistance to the individualising tendencies of neoliberal discourses. There was a significant shift from the language of 'empowering women' who have chosen to come to the Centre, to a language of *building community with* the women in the Centre.

The concept of community can be employed as a resource for conceptualising change, as an ongoing imaginary (Amit, 2002). Community was used to denote inclusion, warmth, intimacy, connection, interdependence, solidarity, activism and ongoing process. *Talking up community,* as Karen described it, enabled the women to perceive themselves as experiencing life changes together, and in doing so reconceptualising community (Amit, 2002). The desire was to build a community with and among the women in the Centre, so that they and we might support and nurture each other. In part this was a resistance to viewing social service as professional care by paid experts. In my own reading I was inspired by Riikonen and Vataja's (1999) idea that 'healing' takes place in everyday contexts and situations, far more than it does in therapeutic settings with psychological experts. This matched the 'sublimeness of home' story shared in Chapter 10, and many other incidents and events I witnessed in the daily life of the Centre. Focusing on building relationships among the women was also a way

[49] Te Ao Maori refers to the Maori world, or worldview.

of locating the women as able to build sound, positive relationships and to be strong for one another, and strong collectively.

Focusing on interdependence and connection also provided a basis for working with the women as they related with their own children, by seeing the wellbeing of mothers and children as strongly interconnected (and conversely witnessing the huge pain, loss and terrible outcomes of damaging those connections). The language reflected and constructed mutuality in relationships between mothers and children.

Staff did talk increasingly about the significance of connections between people and the links between relationships and wellbeing of all kinds, often sharing readings and examples in staff meetings. Women in the Centre also talked about *our community* and challenged each other around relationships. More recently, a group of women who have lived in the Centre have formed the 'Friends of Cross Rose Centre' as a forum for providing support, care and community for the women currently living in the Centre. This came about as people realised the gap which can occur as women leave the Centre having been part of a group of people living communally, and the need to find opportunities for relationships to be sustained beyond life in the Centre.

Community living was of course not always a bed of roses. Just as there were many touching moments of profound connection, so there were lots of rows and arguments. As Amit comments, community is "visceral ... embodied, sensual and emotionally charged" (2002, p.16). Being committed to *building community, relationships and connections* included an ongoing analysis of the exercise of power through the relationships with and between women in the Centre. One of the major decisions taken in late 2001 was to reduce the size of the Centre from 54 beds to 22, primarily because it seemed more possible to form constructive relationships within a smaller community. Staff also became increasingly clear that the Centre was not appropriate for women with serious addictions to alcohol or drugs, again because of the difficulty for some of these women in forming positive relationships. The policies were clarified so that women needed to deal with their addictions before coming to the Centre.

Kaplan (2001) suggests that 'community' is called into being and that grass roots groups of activist women often call into being community as part of their activism, often with a focus on pressing material needs such as housing. She comments that this is quite different to the liberal focus on human rights as a means of activism. In the Centre, community was called into being quite deliberately as resistance to neoliberal discourses and the systems which impinged on the lives of the women and children in the Centre. Community in the Centre existed through the interaction between "the imagination of solidarity and its realization through social relations" (Amit, 2002, p.19).

In using the term 'community', we were aware of the many ways it is used, including its cooption within the very discourses we were resisting. The notion of community appeals to many people. Callinocos (2001) suggests, for example that the discourse of the third way uses a thin veneer of 'community' for global capitalism. At times we were concerned by the ways we saw the term coopted.

One of the other ways community was also used in the Agency was to refer to the group of agencies sited at Te Ara Hou as a *community* and the site as a *village.* During the challenging development of Te Ara Hou, one of the catchphrases had been *community in a new way.* The vision was for a group of agencies to work collaboratively for the benefit of each other and the people they worked with. Again, this was a deliberate resistance to the interagency competition enacted through the contracting culture and the market orientation within the not-for-profit sector. Referring to the Agency as being part of the community sector and claiming Te Ara Hou as a village, added to locating their work as distinct from government or private sectors, as described above. The values statement clearly calls into being community in Te Ara Hou:

> **What it means to be an agency at Te Ara Hou**
> *Te Ara Hou (The New Way) is the site where the vision for a social service village is being lived out. Our agency is one of a number that occupy this site and we have two trustees representing us on the Waikato Christian Social Service Village Trust, the governing body for the buildings owned and occupied by the individual agencies.*

As partners on the site with other agencies, we have agreed to work collaboratively wherever possible, sharing resources and working in solidarity around issues that affect the individuals and families we work with. Whilst there will be differences in the way we work or the philosophies we hold, there is a commitment to find ways to come together for the common good.

In this way we model true community, finding unity in diversity, working directly with the principles and values of the Treaty of Waitangi, and providing holistic ways of working, including spirituality.

Te Ara Hou provides us with a unique and wonderful opportunity to continually discover new ways of being in community and working out of the experience. This becomes a very authentic way of offering support to people because we are in the experience of struggle and joy with them.

And there were struggles. In many conversations we articulated the ways power relations were enacted within the village, most obviously around the introduction to the village of Family Start, an agency established in 6 cities around the country to work with families, particularly those most impoverished or involving parenting issues. Family Start, though a not-for-profit, community based agency, was also government initiated, completely government funded (and well funded by comparison to others), and able to employ many more people than any of the other agencies on site, though some of the work was similar. The organisation was able to attract staff from other agencies often through being able to pay higher salaries, and attracted other government contracts with relative ease. Working collaboratively with other agencies was always challenging. Amit (2002) suggests that community is always constructed with ironic possibilities of alternatives in mind. There is a tension in holding both a scepticism about community alongside a hope and yearning for community. Holding this tension, working with it, was clearly a part of the inquiry.

Community is of course a highly contested term in the sociological literature (Amit, 2002). Some historians choose not to use it because of the romanticism which surrounds it (McClure, 1998). Nevertheless a literature of communitarianism has grown in recent years, often as an alternative discourse to neoliberal discourses of the psychologised individual with individualised human rights (Taylor, 1998; Wertsch, 2001/1990). McNiff (2000) suggests that free markets eradicate the idea of local community and that community exists through and as a place for lively conversation. Bauman suggests that people need to meet daily "to continue their joint effort of translating back and forth between the languages of private concerns and public good" (2001, p.14). Communitarian theorists tend to argue that people are deeply embedded in social relationships and communities are bound by shared ideas about what is good (Dwyer, 2000). A number of theorists have also articulated communitarian approaches to justice, and in resistance to neoliberalism (Taylor, 1998), arguing for invoking people as socially constituted and seeking mutuality in relationships (Barber, 1984):

> we are each other's keepers because the wellbeing of others depends on what we do. That dependence is what makes us ethical beings. This sense of connection is the kernel of Judaeo-Christian teaching, but today there is a contempt for dependence of any kind. (Bauman, 2001, p.75)

In his later writing, Foucault offers the possibility of relational rights, rights which are located in the relationships between people (Gordon, 2000). He suggests we know how to demand rights for individuals but do little to extend the right of forming relationships. This idea was useful as we looked for alternatives to the principle of the paramountcy of the safety of the child, discussed in Chapter 10.

Critics of communitarian theory tend to express concerns about the potential for this discourse to mask difference and to oppress. Ristock and Pennell point out that the risk of the language of building community is of minimising differences within the community: "the goal is not to discard communal connections but to make room for the differences that separate us" (1996, p.18). The Agency values statement ended with the following: w*e exist for the sake of the common good.* However, valuing difference was clearly also both a commitment and dream:

> *We dream of Aotearoa/New Zealand as a country where all people will be liberated to participate fully in this democratic society, where all voices and experiences will be valued and people are able to live out of the uniqueness of their humanity, where the structural causes of poverty, violence, abuse and discrimination will be addressed and where Maori and Pakeha can truly celebrate their identity as Pacific peoples living in the light of their partnership within the Treaty of Waitangi.*

In academic terms the discourse developed within the Centre seemed to me to hold in tension both a politics of identity and a politics of the common good. My academic searching paralleled the work of the Agency in developing a language of community and identity, inspired by a Christian ethic of communion and service. To that was added feminist accounts of connection, relationships and the issues of power always reverberating through them:

> Feminism has offered numerous accounts of marginalized subjectivity, many of which emphasise the body, relationality, contingence, and an inescapable intimacy of mutual imbrication between self and other (although here questions of asymmetry are never far away). (Kilby & Lury, 2000, p. 253)

Kilby and Lury (2000) suggest that the interplay between belonging, recognition and identification is extraordinarily ambivalent, often antagonistic and the site of both resistance to and the possibility of personal and collective change.

We also used the concept of communion in this discourse of resistance. We spoke about being in communion with each other and with others, invoking deliberately Bakan's (1966) sense of communion as about 'being' and relating in the world, rather than achieving and doing individually in the world (Marshall, 1984), and the Christian sense of communion, as both being with each other and with God. I began to describe the space between Karen and I as the heart of the research and the point of learning, and God as being about the spaces between people, and research as also being about the spaces between people. Messer (1998) describes a sense of communion as an experience of participating in something larger than ourselves. Being committed to developing an alternative discourse and to working with the women in the Centre in consciousness raising

had that sense of participating in something larger than any individual pursuit. Christian social justice activist, Jim Consedine, describes his deepening awareness of symbolism in the ritual of Christian communion, though he also remarks that the ritual needs to change so that it is again meaningful to more people:

> Over the years my understanding of the symbolism and meaning of the Eucharist has deepened. I experience it as a gathering where the whole of life can be placed on the table. Here I am able to meet with other people and celebrate together, as we share our hopes and pain. Here I can deepen my understanding of what it means to be in communion with others. Here is where I share the word, internalize the meaning of community and gain the inspiration and courage to continue living fully and doing justice. (in Consedine & Consedine, 2001, p.74)

My own use of the term communion was intended to disrupt the powerful sense of individual agency embedded in all of the discourses of liberal human rights, managerialism, individualism, psychology, fundamental Christianity, and consumerism, and to denote the significance of relationships, connections, and solidarity in the spirituality within which I was locating myself.

D. A spirit of inquiry

In the re-written values of the Agency there is an explicit commitment to inquiry as a way of being:

> *We will always be an agency in process. We are committed to a spirit of inquiry and reflection about the work we do and the world we are part of and maintain. We welcome researchers who offer us opportunities to reflect thoughtfully on our work in order to actively work for social change.*

This *spirit of inquiry* included a focus on conversations, discourses, power, and subjectivity, as is explored further below.

1. Inquiry

The commitment to inquiry was both means and outcome of resistance to neoliberal discourses, because it made possible challenges to processes of truth-making. Inquiry was conceived of as a way of being in the world, for the women in the Centre, the staff in the Agency, and the group and I within the action inquiry. It became part of the culture of the place. It denoted a deliberate contingency, a commitment to exploring those things called truth, and a commitment to exploring together.

Sometimes Karen and I talked about the possibilities for inquiry to be an alternative discourse to managerialism as a way of organising. We wondered if action inquiry might be an alternative to strategic management. Running inquiry workshops with staff rather than strategic planning sessions was one way of trying this out. However what emerged were more deliberate choices about using the discourses of inquiry and management. Sometimes managerialism was a useful resistance to the expertise of psychology as is described in Chapter 10. Talking about co-managing the Centre with the women was a way of shifting the exercise of power within the Agency. Sometimes invoking the concept of 'managing our lives' with the women in the Centre increased the range of subject positions they were able to take up. However it was the notion of inquiry, particularly using a poststructural framework which illuminated the potential for intentional choice in creating and re-creating the work through particular discourses.

Using the discourse of action research with its concern for participation and collaborative processes also paralleled the focus on *building community* in the Agency and as the primary work of the Centre. The inquiry and the service of the Agency were both constructed as embedded in relationships. Action researcher, McNiff (2000), suggests that the personal growth of one individual influences the growth of others that person is in relationship with. This was as pertinent for the women in the Centre as it was for Karen and I in the inquiry. Maguire's exploration of the possibilities for feminist action research linked for

me this inquiry as feminist praxis deeply interwoven with the work of the Agency itself:

> I understand now that one of feminism's gifts is more than a way of seeing, a way of knowing. It is more than interactive knowledge. It is attention to concrete ways of being in the world of relationships. (Maguire, 1996, p.31)

Just as the critiques of communitarianism and the tensions within the language of *building community* were important in the deliberate construction of a discourse of resistance, so too have been critiques of the potential for the language of action research and inquiry to contribute to discourses of neoliberalism. Using the language of inquiry and the notions of discourses, the exercise of power and the significance of subjectivity enabled deliberate and reflexive articulation of an alternative discourse and subject positions.

2. Conversation

One of the ways of being intentional about the construction of the work and the discourses invoked was through focusing on conversation as constructive. Sometimes I thought of action inquiry as 'the creation of conversational community'. In Chapter 8, I described the ways we developed a heightened awareness of our conversations as central to making meaning, to organising, to creating the Centre, and to creating our relationships, and the work. The significance of conversation is expressed beautifully by hooks: "conversation is not a place of meaningless chitchat. It is the place where everything must be learned – the site of all epistemology" (2000, pp.15-16). Being aware of conversation included speaking respectfully about the women in the Centre and acknowledging and sometimes changing the subject positions being allocated them through conversations among staff members. Karen added to my sense of the constructive power of conversations the idea that *some conversations are prayer.*

I believe that most staff members grew more able to recognise the layered effects of making meaning, more able to reflect on their language and to hold

contradictions and tensions. Here is an example. Karen describes the naming of Cross Rose Centre in the following writing:[50]

> *Naming this Centre was another interesting blend of vision, conversation and co-incidence or serendipity. As a number of us directly involved in the Centre's establishment sat together, we began to talk about naming the Centre. We talked about the hope which inspired the vision – that this would be a place where women journeyed to and out of places of pain and wounding, a journey that would continue among us as they continued to pick their way through the thorns, and where discovery of new experiences would lead them into different directions. At first we wondered whether Cross Roads would express this notion of journey, of direction finding and discovery. However we felt it would be too functional a name, and there needed to be greater expression of the beauty and fragrance of women's lives and the emergence of other possibilities, of colour and joy. We were mindful of and speaking about the wonderful roses in the garden surrounding the building. As we spoke the phone rang, and the woman coordinating the project answered "Cross Rose". We looked at one another and recognised in an instant that the name had been given. Cross Rose was opened in February 2000, to the theme song, Bette Midler's "The Rose".*

Later, once the research was well underway, we reflected a number of times on the layered meaning-making occurring in such a name. Some of the women were indeed, and rightfully so, cross Rose. For me, Rose is the name of my second daughter who had died in 1993. Within Christianity, both the cross and the rose are heavily significant. Recognising this multilayering and holding it was part of being able to reflect on the possibility and paradoxes of the Centre creating both justice and injustice: *sometimes it seems like justice is always embedded in injustice* (Karen). Holding this tension was the point of the poem I

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[50] The description is drawn from the keynote paper Karen and I gave at the Conference of the Australia New Zealand Third Sector Research Society in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand (Gatenby & Hume, 2002).

used in my final report to staff, "Please call me by my true name", shown in Appendix 7.

Accepting conversations as significant also included a willingness to review the work of the Centre in a variety of creative ways. The women's stories, songs, poems, artwork and jokes regularly provided evaluations of the work of the staff. Holding an action inquiry ethos provided a base from which to see, hear and feel those ongoing evaluations.

3. Discourses, resistance and power

In Chapter 8 I described developing a workshop for staff using the idea of discourses because Karen and I wanted to be able to challenge truth-making and raise the possibility of alternatives to our current social worlds. The term came to have some currency particularly for Karen and me, but also for some others in the Agency. Karen has recently described using the idea of discourses in a number of presentations well beyond the inquiry. Within the Agency, and for me, discourses as an heuristic device, enabled a commitment to 'holding knowledge lightly', to being reflexive about whatever it is we think we know as truth.

Thinking in terms of discourses also enabled us to think in terms of resistance. As Ristock and Pennell (1996) point out, resistance includes figuring out what is currently unthinkable and the ways knowledge limits us. Then we can imagine ways of disrupting dominant discourses, so that others, perhaps less oppressive in their consequences, can become thinkable. Resistance happened through refusing techniques and relations of power, and certain subject positions. For example, refusing the position of psychological expert for staff members and certain techniques of psychology within psychological discourses, affected the kinds of subject positions available to the women in the Centre. Sometimes resistance seemed too dangerous in this particular Agency, particularly around addiction and unwellness labelled as psychiatric illness, though we noted that there were other community agencies able to resist this kind of pathology,

particularly those working out of kaupapa Maori[51] commitments. Choosing ways to resist the sometime injustices of the principle of the paramountcy of child safety was also complex and contingent. Finding other ways to talk about the safety of children and mothers was one strategy, particularly when it was embedded within a discourse prioritising building relationships and community.

McNiff (2000) suggests that the way we conceptualise power is part of struggling for justice. As action researchers, we might ask ourselves if our efforts contribute to a critical analysis of power and responsible exercise of power (Ristock & Pennell, 1996). Using poststructural discourse theory as central to this inquiry made possible an alternative view of power to the traditional 'power as resource' construction. It did become something of a catchphrase in the Agency to say that p*ower is all around us all the time.* Staff members were then able to re-theorise their own exercise of power and the power exercised by the women in the Centre. Re-theorising power also included re-theorising empowerment, particularly the idea of *empowering women.*

One particular re-theorising happened around the ideas of *success* and *failure* in working with the women in the Centre. Managerialist goals set for the Agency within government contracts included specific kinds of outcomes for the women as proof of the effective use of resources given to the Agency. Entry in paid employment or formal education, financial independence, and successful parenting are examples. At the same time, the early language in the Agency around *empowering women* led to expectations of certain kinds of individualised transformations in the women's lives, so that they were no longer the subject of formal surveillance by statutory agencies such as CYFS, Work and Income, or the police. This dichotomy of success or failure based on the reaching of established goals became very unhelpful in thinking about the work of the Centre. This was partly because labeling the women as either successes or failures seemed cruel and over simplified, given the complexities of their lives. Expecting transformation within a few months when many of the women had faced extreme hardship for all of their lives was both unrealistic and

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[51] Kaupapa Maori services are run according to Maori values and practices.

inappropriate. At one staff meeting, a staff member read a poem by New Zealand author, Joy Cowley, called "Let's celebrate the failures" which invoked celebration of humanity with all its failures and mistakes, in deliberate resistance to the ethos of certain kinds of individual achievement as success. Many of the women did not see their lives or themselves as being in need of transformation. They did not see themselves as failures needing to be turned into successes, and neither did the staff members want to locate the women or themselves in this way, although contractual obligations for government funding seemed to require this kind of construction. This is not to say that there were not many causes for celebration. Staff members and women in the Centre alike did celebrate many good turning points. We began to talk about the *revolving door policy* in the Centre, which meant that women could come for a while, move out again, and then come back. Success or failure was not black and white; women's lives were not either good or bad.

6. Subjectivity

One of the most important aspects of the resistance emerged as resistance to a limited and limiting range of subject positions for the women in the Centre, specifically those which positioned the women as bad, sad or mad, or dangerous mothers. Neoliberal discourses tend to assume a unitary view of self, immutable over time, though subject to various forms of self-development. A unitary view of self doesn't allow changes in subjectivity and tends to mask the critical role of language, interactions and pivotal experiences in the production and transformation of self (Bloom, 2002). Such a view also makes difficult an analysis of gender as a social position influencing the formation of subjectivity. Unitary views of self and essentialising views of gender tend to go hand in hand. The neoliberal discourses operating in the work of the Agency tended to assume and maintain such a unitary view of individuals and of gender.

Increasing the range of subject positions available to both women and staff was one way transformation sometimes happened. Most staff members came to understand women in the Centre as having multiple and fragmented identities too, and as speaking from a range of subject positions. This was particularly

poignant around locating the women as loving mothers and at the same time, in some instances, as mothers who have been violent, or who struggle to parent day by day. Featherstone (2000) in her research on mothering, points out that poststuctural theory makes it okay to be ambivalent and to appreciate subjects as multiply positioned rather than fixed as good or bad. Mothering is not all pleasure (FitzRoy, 1999). In the Centre Karen especially made space for it to be okay for the women to talk about this without risk. It was also important at some points to articulate that the women also resisted unitary and limiting views of themselves.

Many of the conversations between Karen and me turned to our own subjectivity in relation to the subjectivity of the women in the Centre. One particular instance highlighted for me the fluidity of subjectivity and identity. Following a number of our conversations in which we puzzled about the appropriateness of Pakeha women working with Maori women, Karen talked quietly with a group of Maori women in the Centre about her relationships with them, giving them the opportunity to say they would rather work with more Maori staff members. They were shocked at the suggestion: *but we think of you as a Maori woman, you're whanau*, one of them said to Karen. I began to think about the need to hold identity politics both firmly and lightly. Sawicki (1994) suggests that debates among feminists about the implications of Foucault's theories highlight tensions about the viability of identity politics. In the Agency invoking the Treaty of Waitangi as part of a discourse of resistance drew on identity politics, but this was also held in tension with a more fluid notion of subjectivity. Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, Matahaere-Atariki (1998; 2001) expresses her concern about the unproblematised identity conceived for Maori women, particularly those constructed as receiving "for Maori by Maori" services.

There were many times when Karen resisted constructions of the women as lacking or 'other' to the women in the staff, often by saying: w*e are those women and they are us.* In doing so, she sometimes claimed the margins in solidarity with the women in the Centre, or at other times refused to locate the women as on the margins. Rossiter (2000) suggests that Foucault understood social work and social service to be part of the web of power of governmentality:

> The work of governmentality is done through exclusion, the human sciences have created categories, languages and programmes which unify diverse people and place them on the margins as Other. People thus marginalised do the work of making the difference - of providing the contrast by which the centre, the authorized versions come into view. (Rossiter, 2000, p.32)

At the same time as expressing this solidarity and refusing to 'other' the women, Karen and others clearly held an analysis of the processes of marginalisation and of the privileges of their own lives. Being able to work with subjectivity was also always an articulation of the workings of power. One of the most memorable moments in the inquiry for me, came when Donna, Coordinator of the Centre, expressed her anger in a staff meeting about the construction of the women as dangerous and inadequate: *if you want to work with the women you have to like them first, you have to see them as competent.*

E. Ongoing reflexivity

We were aware as we invoked an alternative discourse that there is no pure discourse, and that the discourse of community has its own mannerisms of oppression. But in this place, and at this time, it was a matter of resistance and self-conscious creativity. The action inquiry focus on reflection, and the poststructural focus on reflexivity and subjectivity worked together as a guide for encouraging staff to be reflexive about their own subjectivity within particular discourses, the subjectivity of the women they worked with and the power embedded in their relationships with women in Cross Rose Centre. Most staff became more self-conscious about their positions and the power relations they were involved in. It seems important to say at this point that developing a discourse of resistance requires also a continuing reflexivity about that discourse, to understand the limitations and injustices which will also emerge through its use. This seems to me to be a commitment to hold all knowledge lightly. At this place and at this time, the resistance itself was important.

The action inquiry described in this thesis did contribute to a number of changes in the Agency, primarily through encouraging a critique of dominant neoliberal discourses and the development of a discourse of resistance. The inquiry also enabled a number of theoretical questions to emerge. The contributions of the inquiry on a number of levels are discussed in Chapter 12, which draws this thesis to a close.

Chapter 12

Reflections on contributions and validity

A. Introduction

In the first part of this thesis I provided contextual information about the social and economic policy setting and the theoretical perspectives underpinning the action inquiry I undertook with Waikato Anglican Social Services/Anglican Action. In the second part I traced the emerging inquiry questions and the method which developed, and used the notions of first, second and third person research together with the poststructural concepts of reflexivity and subjectivity to examine my own subjectivity and relationships within the inquiry. Through the inquiry an analysis of the dominant neoliberal discourses in the work of the Agency became possible, together with the articulation of a number of commitments which together worked in resistance to those discourses. This analysis and the resistance have been presented in Part III. In this final chapter I draw this thesis to a close by examining the contributions made through the action inquiry and the validity of the work in action research and poststructural terms.

B. Contributions

There are three perspectives from which I wish to discuss the contributions of this action inquiry. The first is from the perspective of the Agency. The second is in terms of my own life and commitments. The third is in relation to the academic conversations I have drawn on and made contributions to through the inquiry, particularly those of feminist poststructural theory and action research.

1. Contributions to the Agency, the Centre and the people involved in them

The questions and the range of methods which emerged through intentional engagement with the staff in the Agency enabled us to inquire together about their work with the women in Cross Rose Centre. Looking back, I believe that the respectful building of relationships and the development of a significant range of methods of inquiring have both worked together to hold open a space for a culture of inquiry to emerge. Using a discourse perspective meant we were able to be reflexive about what we 'know', 'truth-making' and the subjectivity of both ourselves and the women, including the positioning of the women as 'bad, mad or sad', the related issues of care and protection of their children, and the intersections with the subjectivity of staff. We were able to build knowledge about the dominant discourses operating in social service work and social policy, and the ways certain groups of women and their relationships with their children are constructed and positioned within those discourses. We were able to critique that positioning and the related positioning of social service workers, and to work toward providing alternatives.

Staff members in the Agency became more reflexive about the politics of the language of 'choice', therapy as transformation, and strategic management as social service. This reflexivity provides the kind of reflexivity called for by a number of poststructural and feminist writers, including Foucault (1991) in relation to neoliberal discourses, Garland (2001), Ristock and Pennell (1996), and Kilby and Lury (2000). The more reflexive understanding of social service work is theorised in writing about social work, such as that of Cheyne, O'Brien and Belgrave (2000), Matahaere-Atariki, Bertanees and Hoffman (2001), and Munford (1997) in Aotearoa New Zealand, and Fook (2002), Davis (1991) and others from other nations.

At the beginning of the inquiry, Cross Rose Centre was a very new service, a service being watched by various people from around the country, since it was considered new and potentially risky. Staff members felt vulnerable, though they were passionately committed to this new service, and the hope and vision they aspired to within it. Through the course of the inquiry, a more complex

understanding of the work of the Centre emerged, including the dangers and potential of working for social justice within a social service setting. This understanding was illustrated in the frequent expression of a greater awareness of the broader social and political context of the Agency, the staff and the women in the Centre, and the ways in which that context was maintained and shifted, including the workings of power enmeshed in its minute by minute emergence.

I suggest that the most significant outcome of the inquiry for the women in the Centre and the staff members involved, was the development of a range of subject positions for both, rather than a unitary construction of each person on one side or other of a range of dichotomies: good or bad mothers, server or served, knower or unknowing, prisoner or inmate, counsellor or counselled. This more typical set of dichotomies constructs transformation as the movement from one side of the dichotomy to the correct other side, with each side only able to exist because of the ongoing salience of the other side. Transforming women from bad mothers to good mothers will always require the construction of bad mothers, which also requires a focus on children as in danger. In this way, our world will always require and maintain dangerous mothering. In contrast, being reflexive about the complexities of our own subject positions as women, mothers, researchers, inquirers, social service workers, and so on, is a way of acknowledging, enabling and constructing a range of possible subject positions for those we are in relationship with, whether they be friends, colleagues or women in a social service.

Karen wrote the following as she read draft chapters for this thesis, and consequently reflected on the inquiry:

> *As I read and re read the story of the inquiry that Bev invited us into at the agency, I am astonished at my own sense of validation in the work that we have been engaged in for a number of years now. Bev has managed to articulate what has been and continues to be, largely unspoken ways of being and knowing. Often our ways of working have been subsumed under the dominant management hierarchy and portrayed as quaint or quirky at best and ineffective and inefficient at worst. This*

inquiry has legitimated us and our work and our way of trying to understand and shape our world. Nothing else has ever achieved that in my view. The focus on the relationships within the Agency and with the families in Cross Rose expresses our best hope for positive change in all of us.

The way that Bev undertook the inquiry has given us a sense that it can be an ongoing process and dynamic. It is not a piece of research that had a beginning and an end. Although Bev's time with us was finite, she left us equipped to continue to reflect and act on our own changing thinking and acting. As a result, we are not the same people or agency as we were when she was with us. We are continually thinking and talking and reflecting upon the discourses we are engaged in and creating. We feel confident to critique and build our own, recognising that we will need to stay in that process continually. I see this happening on a daily basis in the apparently small things as well as in the bigger policy development work. We take this notion of inquiry into our annual planning day and I recently utilised this as a means of workshopping with my Board as I shared with them the report on my recent study leave. It moved it from a one dimensional report on paper to a rich discussion and consequent action.

One of the most significant outcomes of adopting an inquiry model is that people feel safe enough to be honest and transparent about their thinking and working. It creates an environment where conversation and listening leads us to change and challenge without feeling diminished. I believe this has been the key in building a stronger and more cohesive agency community.

I am also struck as I read, by how much things have changed from those early days. I am glad we did not have someone come and "research" us and record everything as if we were fixed in that time and place. Inquiry gives a much greater sense that change is always happening and nothing is immutable.

I think we have consolidated our own processes of inquiry and continue to enter with greater confidence, the ever changing dynamic of sharing lives, ideas, ideals, vision and hope. I know that a great deal of our confidence for pursuing paths of inquiry emanate from the time when Bev came and shared herself, her knowledges and her vulnerability and deconstructed the notion of research as something that was being done by an expert, apart from us.

There is still a great sense that Bev, when she enters through the Agency doors, returns to a whanau who respect and love her. She is part of us and we continue to inquire of her and she of us way beyond the purely academic. That is not to say that we did not recognise that what Bev was inviting us into, were ways of thinking that came from a wide range of academic thinkers. However she enabled us to access that thinking and make it entirely relevant to our own and there was, I believe, a great number of aha! moments as people made sense of how their world had been constructed and equally a great sense of liberation when we also recognised that we could deconstruct it and seek to discover ways to recreate it. If you like, this is true "empowerment".

My thinking has certainly been shaped by the many conversations and papers that Bev offered me. I have, since Bev's time with us, used the discourse theory in particular to assist others in their thinking. I no longer feel apologetic for integrating my spirituality and its many dimensions into my talking, thinking and acting. I feel as though Bev has helped me to "come out" in this aspect of myself, particularly as I go into a number of "secular" places to speak and share.

Inquiry is not an academic research tool, or theory, it is a legitimate means to express your humanity and is already an integral part of who we all are. It allows all of us to have a valid voice and to participate as equals – I celebrate this as the best way to achieve justice through service.

Karen's writing indicates that a significant contribution has been an orientation toward and way of being in **inquiry**, as a way of being involved in justice work. This orientation parallels ideas about truth and subjectivity highlighted in poststructural theory, as Flax points out:

> both justice and the self can be conceptualized as complex processes that are necessarily imperfect, incomplete and without an end, justification or ground outside of themselves. (1992, p.204)

Perhaps the most significant contribution has been to unsettle truth and inevitability and at the same time to provide ways of living reflexively and inquiringly with this unsettling, while still being committed to relationships, action and justice. Reflexivity and inquiry skills became part of the new way of being professional in the Agency, as Fook (2002) also describes, and provided a model for building relationships and community in the Centre.

Over the particular time of this research, the mode of inquiry developed provided the means to articulate and analyse the workings of a range of Western neoliberal discourses dominating in social service work in this country, including managerialism, consumerism, psychological discourses, professionalised social service, and discourses of human rights. Resistance to neoliberal individualism was articulated through locating transformation and wellbeing as existing in and through relationship, conversation, connection and communion with others and through building community, rather than through interventions with individuals. Developing a resistant discourse was not about the construction of another orthodoxy, but about intentionally resisting some old orthodoxies where they seemed tied up with injustice. The resistant discourse was also about imagining and reframing new ways of being while still holding the need for constant reflexivity about those new ways and their mutability, dangers and potential for ongoing transformation.

The work of staff in the Centre shifted away from individual counselling to social advocacy and consciousness-raising. Opportunities were provided to explore the ways staff in the Centre might draw on the discourse of biculturalism and the Treaty of Waitangi in their work. Other researchers and social activists

joined in the work. The Agency was re-named and its vision and mission re-written. Action inquiry as it emerged here, has been a significant part of the resistance to neoliberalism, a resistance called for by a number of writers in the action research field (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003; McNiff & Whitehead, 2000).

2. Contributions in my own life

The inquiry has also been profoundly significant in my own life, for many reasons, not least for the relationships formed through it, and the relational knowledge (Park, 2001) they have made possible, particularly through the long conversations between Karen and me.

Marshall and Reason (1993) note that students completing action research projects do so because the research is significant to them in their life process. This research, as an opportunity for relationships, conversations, reading and thinking, has provided me with an opportunity to explore issues significant in my own life. This has included finding a place to stand as a Christian woman and feminist and social scientist, with all of the complexities and ambiguities of such a positioning, and knowing that such a positioning is also a resistance to neoliberal discourses in my own life, particularly those which contain me as a boundaried, coherent, knowable and independent individual. I construct faith as an ongoing inquiry in my life.

The research has sometimes meant caressing the knife edge of loss and pain in my life, and I have experienced this as a profound way of seeing and knowing. I have had opportunities to read in fields such as deconstructive psychology, critical social work, the rights of children, and feminist theology, all of which have energised and stimulated my thinking. I have been able to develop a way of 'living my life as inquiry' (Marshall, 1999), in a way that is committed to action and relationships, and mindful of the ongoing construction of our worlds.

While in Chapter 9 I recounted the shifts in my thinking and the range of subject positions I occupied through the inquiry, spending some months writing this

thesis has also provided an opportunity to reflect from a point of some distance, on my positioning in the inquiry and the power issues always attendant upon that positioning. The questions which have preoccupied me since have been the following:

> How do I now think about my exercise of power (and that of those located as researchers or inquirers) to articulate or teach or construct knowledge and truth?
>
> Was it okay to be influential in the shifts in direction of the Agency?
>
> When and how is it okay to challenge or unsettle others' 'truths' and therefore their sense of themselves? Can we ever avoid doing so?
>
> Did the relationship between Karen and I mean that we exercised power in ways that were not okay?
>
> What of the 'beliefs', 'truths', 'knowledge' that I brought with me?

There are no simple or clear answers to any of these questions and whatever responses I give now, I give both deeply and lightly, knowing they are the result of careful and deep thinking and change in my own life, and that at the same time I may well think something differently in the future and that whatever I 'know' about them may be challenged by others.

I came in to the Agency with sets of experiences, knowledges and skills, and related subject positions, some of which became important in the inquiry. I do tend to prefer collective discourses and this made the Agency an attractive place to be. I did not know at the beginning that poststructural theory as a way of reading the world would become so significant in the inquiry, though I did enter the Agency explicitly offering an action and participatory framework. The tensions and creativity provided by combining methods of living life as inquiry and poststructural notions about reflexivity, power, truth and subjectivity, shifted my thinking a great deal. I have become more clearly committed to 'holding knowledge lightly'. Like Foucault (in Elders, 1974), I do think everything is potentially dangerous. However I also believe that living by this statement has its own danger, which is a kind of paralysis, an inability to act or to intervene in injustice, because of a wariness and a weariness caused by ongoing analysis of the dangers of alternative reframings and imaginings, and an impossibility of seeing anything as good or positive. I choose poststructural reflexivity as a

means of first person inquiry matched with a prioritising of relationships as a means of trying to act justly, despite the dangers.

Feedback within the Agency has been consistently positive about my inquiring as an articulate person encouraging others to inquire with me, though of course individuals also found their own ways to articulate their own understandings. Sometimes unsettling truth for others was painful, including for me. I suspect that working with women around transformation of their lives was always going to unsettle truths and subjectivity for the women and the staff members of the Centre.

As Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn and Walkerdine (1984) and Alcoff (2000/1988) point out, as much as 'who we are' is related to 'what we know', it is also related to 'who we are with'. Explicating my friendship with Karen in this thesis has been an intentional choice to illustrate this interrelatedness between knowledge/truth, relationship, self/selves and power. Karen and I were constantly aware of and thinking through the power we exercised as respectively Director of the Agency and researcher, who also became close friends. This was no simple or complete exercise of power; there were also ways we could not exercise power, ways we chose not to exercise power and ways others resisted. Although one or two staff members chose to leave the Agency a year or so after the inquiry ended, partly because of the philosophical shifts in the Agency, they moved to other significant places in their lives which they have spoken positively about, and with positive relationships maintained with those still in the Agency. There were many friendships within the Agency for both of us and among all of us. Karen's ability and interest in sustained co-inquiry made our friendship particularly significant in this action inquiry. Other staff members appeared to value our visible friendship, perhaps because of the broader culture of inquiry which encouraged all of us to hold knowledge lightly, to prioritise relationships, and to think about our exercise of power.

3. Contributions to academic conversations

The intersections between poststructural theory and action research have become particularly significant for me through this inquiry. I went into the Agency offering action research as an appropriate way to work within the Agency culture and commitments which fitted with my own preferences for participative egalitarian approaches. I then introduced a poststructural approach within that research because of the difficulty of challenging 'knowing' in our minute by minute interactions, particularly 'knowing' about the women who lived in the Centre. The inquiry methods, which became a way of being in the organisation drew on the convergence of poststructural theory and action research. The gains from this convergence have been in combining work on discourses, resistance, reflexivity and subjectivity with a way of being in the Agency which drew on action research commitments.

Action research provided a way of working with a group of people to develop a localised analysis of the dynamics of oppression and to develop strategies of resistance, precisely what Foucault's work invites us to do. Foucault's work also became particularly useful because of its potential for showing disciplinary techniques that subjugate women as subjects and objects of knowledge, and its focus on strategies of resistance. Consciousness raising, for example, is a technique of both poststructural feminism (Butler, 1990) and action research. Fook (2002) also notes that action research can be useful for the construction of alternative narratives while feminist poststructural theory is useful for challenging binaries and thinking about the effects of certain ideas in certain places. Wetherell (2001a) describes a vision of the discourse analyst as an active force in society and politics, who chooses to work on pressing social and political issues. In the inquiry described here, a group of staff became active discourse analysts working on pressing social issues, through the action inquiry framework. Both the discourses of action research and of poststructural theory have been integral parts of the broader resistance to neoliberal discourses in this inquiry, academically, practically and personally.

Ideas about communion and agency, as Marshall (1984) and Bakan (1966) describe them, were useful at different points in my thinking. There was a focus on communion both in the method which developed and in the work in the Centre as it was expressed and constructed through the discourse of resistance which developed. Prioritising communion over agency was also both resistance to neoliberalism and a way of living action inquiry, with the women in the Centre, with the staff in the Agency, and as an action researcher. However, viewing communion and agency as a dichotomy draws them rather too close to the dichotomies of action and reflection, and practice and theory, which continue to undermine the action research ethos and to distract action researchers from working in the multiple conversations possible through undertaking their research. A focus on action and agency can work against multiplicity, unless action and agency are intentionally connected with subjectivity, relationship and inquiry. I now think of the action inquiry described here as a form of communion enhanced by poststructural attention to agency, through attention to subjectivity. This resonates with links made by poststructural theorists between conceptions of justice and subjectivity. Matters of justice are always about matters of subjectivity and relationship (Flax, 1992). To undertake an action inquiry which had matters of justice at its heart has required careful attention to subjectivity and relationship.

I want to argue for the significant contribution made to action research by commitment to poststructural ideas and processes of reflexivity about subjectivity. Other researchers too are beginning to see the potential of the links between these two discourses of research. Treleaven's (2001) work linking poststructural theory and participatory research drew attention to the potential in combining two theoretical and methodological approaches which prioritise language and conversation, as constructive of alternative imaginings for organisational processes, particularly in relation to gender. In a recent project examining the multiple relationships between doctoral supervisors and students, McMorland, Carroll, Copas and Pringle (2003) use a conversational inquiry approach to examine the complexities of subjectivity and reflexivity, and in doing so produce new and deeper understandings.

However, what is less clear in these recent works is the way in which interweaving poststructural and action research discourses also throws into relief both tensions and possibilities for richer understandings and action. The convergence of action research and poststructural theory is not without tension. For example, taking a poststructural perspective has also highlighted the potential for action research discourse to be located firmly within neoliberal discourses. Lennie, Hatcher and Morgan (2003) use a feminist and Foucauldian approach to de-stabilise the position of those wishing to do feminist action research. They affirm the contribution of Foucault's theory of discourse and power/knowledge to action research because it commits academics to involvement in political struggles while still constantly questioning the 'truth' of their knowledge and selves:

> Given the emphasis on freedom, control and choice in dominant liberal humanist discourses of empowerment, an awareness of the limits to human agency is necessary. (Lennie et al., 2003, p.63)

In the inquiry reported in this thesis, poststructural notions of power as it is exercised minute by minute through sets of knowledge, interaction and subject positioning, enabled greater understanding of the (im)possibilities for women in social service settings. In action research power tends to be under theorised and too often relies on the dichotomy of powerful/powerless, with empowerment being viewed simplistically as the transfer of power from one to the other. Empowerment through action inquiry fundamentally changes when poststructural understandings of power and empowerment are worked with. Reflection, or rather reflexivity about our positions as action researchers becomes more complex, messy, fragmentary and aware.

Poststructural theory enables us to problematise the action research discourse. Miller and Rose's (2001/1988) work on the Tavistock Institute's part in the rise of managerialism and associated psychological discourses alerted me to the ways action research may also be part of the same neoliberal discourses, since the Institute has also had a significant part in the development of some strands of action research. Critiquing psychological and managerial discourses in the Agency opened up questions about both in relation to action research. Managing and acting with agency are sometimes positioned as very similar. Acting through

the opportunities provided by action research may mean acting in ways which maintain, and increase the exercise of power by those already most able to ensure their knowledge is seen as valid and true. The focus on first person research in some of the recent action research writing sometimes felt like a part of the Enlightenment human development project, primarily because it assumes a knowable and singular self, and does not necessarily invite reflexivity about our own exercise of power in relation to what we know. I have also found some conceptions of spirituality in action research which limit spirituality to individual practice, to be primarily individualising. As Bauman (2001) points out there is a danger that an endless focus on reflection is the very epitome of individualisation. Moving to poststructural reflexivity, because it involves thinking through our selves to what we know and our relationships with others may be a way of avoiding this individualism.

Poststructural theory has enabled me to problematise action research as a discourse, thereby provoking questions such as:

> What subject positions do we occupy within the action research discourse?
>
> How do those positions change during the research?
>
> How are those subjectivities related to our positioning, and that of others within other research discourses and research settings?
>
> How is power exercised through the action research discourse?
>
> How do we exercise power as action researchers?
>
> What does the invocation of empowerment and participation through action research make possible and impossible?
>
> What is possible and what subject positions do we invoke when we articulate action research as living life as inquiry both for ourselves and those we invite in to the process?
>
> What are the effects on how we think about first person research if we see ourselves as messy, fragmentary and multiple?
>
> How does poststructural reflexivity relate to the action research focus on the reflection/action dichotomy?

In the inquiry recorded here, the action research discourse, although held in tension, also provided a focus on relationships and emergent methodology which provided a way of doing poststructural research **with** a group of people. Poststructural theory, while illuminating for many people, has not been readily applied to organisational settings as an intentional intervention agreed to and emerging as a way of inquiring together. The method which emerged in this inquiry relied heavily on ideas about inquiring together and participatory intent, which have developed through the action research discourse. The notions of participation, action, reflection and transformation as traditionally envisaged within action research may now seem more complex and difficult. They also provided a way to create an inquiry which could allow them to be questioned.

I suggest the language within action research could move to a focus on reflexivity, subjectivity, discourse and relationships. Others too have written about relationships and knowledge in the context of action research. Gergen (2003), for example, calls for a much greater understanding of and language around 'relational' being in both forms of democracy and action research. In the inquiry described here, the most significant insights occurred within relationship, particularly within the close relationship between Karen and me. In Cross Rose Centre, transformation sometimes happened because relationships were prioritised through aiming to build community with the women in the Centre. The idea that the safety of children is paramount was problematic because it did **not** allow for relationships to be prioritised. Gergen also argues that a non-foundational, always shifting ethic of responsibility must accompany a re-centering of relational being, including within action research. In this inquiry, using poststructural theory provided an impetus and means for ongoing awareness and examination of that responsibility.

This kind of responsibility is inextricably linked with justice. In this inquiry, justice became a verb, rather than a noun. It became an ongoing, shifting, intentional, mindful process. From a poststructural perspective, Flax argues that justice work requires communities of involvement and certain conditions:

> To take responsibility collectively requires at least three conditions: (a) a community of discourse that cares for its transitional space; (b) individuals

> capable of desiring justice; (c) visible connections between speech, deliberation, empathy and outcomes. To have a community of discourse there must be rules, norms and practices which govern and nurture collective discourse and action. ...To have individuals capable of desiring justice requires persons who need connections with others, who are able and willing to see how their own acts affect others and who are able to tolerate the prospect of engaging in an open process without a guaranteed end or result or privileged position within it. Such individuals will also seek out and be mindful of differences; they will worry when discourse becomes too mono-vocal, stable or unitary. (Flax, 1992, p.207)

The action inquiry here, because of the potential of the action research discourse and the poststructural perspective which became central to it, did create a community of discourse within which relationships between people desiring justice provided the place of ongoing inquiry. The particular justice site within which this community of inquiry developed has also provided an opportunity to contribute to academic conversations about social policy in relation to both community based not-for-profit organisations and social service and care for women and their children.

C. Validity

In this discussion of validity in the action inquiry described in this thesis, I draw on both Reason and Bradbury's (2001) exploration of key choice points and questions for validity in action research and some questions about research validity posed by poststructural feminists. These constructions of validity are in marked contrast to the ways in which the term is used within traditional positivist research (Newman, 1999).

For action researchers, the focus is not on objectivity, distance and controls, but rather on relevance and social change (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003), the quality of conversations and relationships (Reason, 2003a, 2003b) and the opportunities to generate new descriptions (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). In Chapter 3, I

presented a number of questions Reason and Bradbury (2001) propose as a guide for thinking about validity in action research, which I now use to discuss this action inquiry. The questions relate particularly to issues of dialogue, engagement, pragmatic outcomes and an emergent reflexive sense of what is important.

The action inquiry provided a space for a group of staff members in a social service agency to inquire together about their aspirations to enact *justice through service* in their work within a residential service for women and children. Over two years, our engagement with each other and with issues regarding the construction of gender and of justice work provided some profound insights, because of the focus on conversations and inquiring through the multiplicity of our relationships with each other, both of which were paralleled in their work with the women in the Centre. The inquiry moved in ways which were not predictable at the outset. Neither staff members, nor I, knew that we would be working and thinking so deeply about the safety of children and of mother/child relationships. As Karen's writing above demonstrates, staff members continue to work from an inquiry perspective in their everyday practice, well beyond the time of the inquiry described here, and many of our relationships endure.

There were a number of pragmatic outcomes, including the re-naming of the Agency, the re-articulation of the vision and mission, and a number of changed narratives which changed the everyday interactions between staff members and the women in the Centre. The Agency moved to a social advocacy approach, in preference to an individual therapeutic approach as part of its articulation of an alternative discourse to the dominant neoliberal discourses. We became more articulate about the minute-by-minute operations of neoliberalism in the Agency and more creative and articulate about the possibilities for resistance and the creation of alternatives, including the possibilities for alternative discourses from within Christianity. The method itself provided some practical tools too. As Karen writes, she often draws on the notion of discourse and inquiry in her work with others. Inquiry methods did become and continue to be an alternative to strategic planning methods.

Both action research and poststructural theorists have argued that validity should also be judged by the quality of the outcomes for those most affected by the research (Ristock & Pennell, 1996). I believe that the inquiry made Cross Rose Centre a better place for the women who lived there, though I also know that the outcomes for them are likely to be complex and contradictory. This is true too for the staff in the Agency. As Lennie, Hatcher and Morgan (2003) point out, the multiple positions available to feminist action researchers have implications for researchers and participants which are likely to have contradictory effects in terms of women's empowerment. Similarly, the multiple positions available to the staff members involved in this inquiry, in relation to the women in the Centre, also have multiple and contradictory effects in terms of 'empowerment'. Taking a poststructural approach requires that we pay attention to issues of power and domination, including re-thinking the language of empowerment (Ristock & Pennell, 1996). One aspect of the validity of this inquiry lies in having engendered a parallel reflexivity about my multiple subjectivities in the research, and the multiple subjectivities of the staff members and women in the Centre.

Both method and content were shifted significantly by the poststructural approach which emerged. From a poststructural perspective, there are other aspects to validity, which I suggest need to regularly be part of questions of validity in action research too. Riley (2003), for example, rejects the idea that reflexivity provides ever more 'truthful' approximations of the research process and the author, and argues that research validity occurs through enabling the creation of new ways of understanding our research and power relations within it, which enable tension and contradiction to come to the fore. In this inquiry, the tensions and contradictions in the subject positions available, contested and claimed by both staff members and the women in the Centre were able to be articulated through the inquiry process. The "four eggs and two cups of coffee" story provided one small example of the multiple readings and positions available, articulated and sometimes resisted through the work.

D. Some final comments

For my part, I came to see the action inquiry as part of the discourse of resistance to neoliberal discourses, articulated through the inquiry. The notions of empowerment, solidarity, transformation, justice and participation are all common to communitarian approaches to social service, feminist theology and the discourse of action research, and all co-opted at times within neoliberal discourses. Taking an action research **and** poststructural approach enabled closer scrutiny by the staff of their own work and its effects, and the possibilities and the impossibilities for social service work intended to empower women in this country. The perspective also enabled closer scrutiny of my own work as a feminist researcher. Our work and inquiry were embedded within wider discourses, some of which were more powerful than others, and the articulation of resistance was deliberate and thoughtful. It was matched also by an understanding that within dominant discourses there are spaces for justice, just as within discourses of resistance there is space for both justice and injustice.

Through this inquiry and through the work of the Agency and the Centre, I have been able to work with a wonderful group of people to explore the possibilities and impossibilities invoked by problematising social justice as a discursive formation. As an academic I have also been able to problematise the discourse of action research by embroiling it in the discourse of feminist poststructural theory. I remain committed to the possibilities for justice through action research and through social service.

Appendix 1

Workshop: Action inquiry
20 December 2000

Participants: Staff, volunteers and Board members of the Agency were invited. All staff, 2 volunteers and 4 members of the Board attended.

Venue: Te Ara Hou Chapel and seminar room.

Purposes of workshop: a) for Karen and Bev to share their experiences of the Stroud workshop.
b) to introduce first, second and third person inquiry as a form of reflection in the Agency.
c) to use first and second person inquiry to reflect on the social justice work of the Agency.
c) to discuss the emergent action inquiry.

Outline:

1. Opening (in Te Ara Hou Chapel):

Celtic greeting dance (borrowed from Stroud workshop). In this dance, a circle of people repeat several simple steps, engaging each other's eyes as they dance and thus greeting each other.

1. Report by Karen and Bev on trip to Stroud:

Showed photographs and shared stories. Talked about increasing awareness of significance of different forms of inquiry and value of opportunities for reflection.

2. Discussion facilitated by Bev on research questions and methods.

3. Action inquiry regarding the work of the Agency and social justice:
    a) First person inquiry – time alone walking, sitting, writing, as appropriate.
    b) Second person inquiry – time together in threes to talk. Groups able to bring something back to share with the group if they wished.
    c) Sharing our reflections and inquiry.

5. Close: opportunity to talk about workshop or close as otherwise appropriate.

Appendix 2

Workshop: Discourses
13 June 2001

Participants: staff members of the Agency

Venue: Houchen Retreat House

Purposes:

a) to introduce the idea of 'discourses' as a way of encouraging reflexivity about the work of the Agency.
b) to discuss the discourses available and drawn from in the work of the Agency.

Outline:

1. Welcome and introduction to purpose of workshop

Some thinking about ideas and knowledge and how they work.
Quite theoretical work about developments in social sciences over last 3 decades.
Important to work with ideas – explore the things we take for granted, be conscious and articulate about the world we live in and the sort of world we want to live in.

2. Some key ideas:

Modernity (last 200 years or so)

- The scientific project/rationality/secularisation
- Search for truth, cause, prescription
- The idea of "progress"

Postmodernism

- Disillusionment with science
- Challenges the notion of "truth" - "plurality"
  - everything is relative
  - no more certainty
  - those who claim truth do so out of a position of interest
- Challenges to the idea of progress

Thinking about truth

- What is real?
- What is it possible to know?

Positivism

- Reality exists out there, we all have different perceptions of it.
- Truth: finding out exactly what that reality is (science).

Post-positivism (since 1960's)

ie social constructionism

- The social world doesn't exist out there as reality, but rather we create it and maintain it through our interaction with each other

ie "the social construction of meaning"

- Focus on "meaning-making", "sense-making"
- Questions what we call facts

eg hearing voices: what does that mean?

What are our general agreed-upon meanings?

eg family

Some times to think about our language:

"the reality is"

"it's human nature"

"it's inevitable"

At certain times we want to hide the construction of meaning

eg "globalisation... the **reality** is we now live in a global marketplace, its inevitable that New Zealand become part of this, its human nature to want to be part of the whole world"

For discussion:

Think of some examples of times in the Agency when we say "the reality is", "it's human nature..."

Whenever we say that I think its time to stop and ask ourselves

"Why am I saying this?"

"Who, or what am I silencing?"

"What am I giving voice too?"

Knowledge-making ie deciding what is certain, fact, truth creates a reality which favours those who hold power.

ie there are dominant worldviews (paradigms) which can be challenged.

Idea of Discourses:

Reason for choosing this theory has been to unsettle our "taken-for-granted" knowledge, and start to pay attention to what we construct, maintain and create.

Discourse: "a set of common acts or strategies", "a process of creating social meaning" (Foucault)

A discourse regulates:

1. What is known and what can be known
2. What is done and said, and what can be done and said
3. Our sense of self, and the particular identities that it takes the form of
4. The power issues that permeate all these social practices

In society there are all kinds of competing discourses. Some have more power than others:

eg Western medical discourse has its own rules about what "truth" is and can be including rules about who is "qualified" to speak on medical matters.

Discourses are maintained through social institutions (churches, education, policy, political systems, legal systems, family).

Power infiltrates into everyday life through language and practices.

Language is co-opted.

Discussion: describe the dominant and alternative discourses (competing, jostling, changing) in the work of the Agency:

As a not- for- profit organisation
Calls for civil society with community input
Managerialism and being 'business-like'
Individualism

- Individual as site of analysis, change and responsibility
- Demonstrated in the rise of power of psychology and psychologist/counsellors/therapists
- Closely aligned to managerialism - eg "manage ourselves"
- Also linked to "human rights" movement
- And linked to consumerism:
  - we are what we have
  - we are commodities
  - we have a right to 'consume' eg relationship with 'land'

Feminism
Christianity

- Anglican
- Fundamentalism (linked to individualism)
- As a Christian social service: what are we allowed to do? To be? To speak about?

Discussion: trying to build a new discourse?

- Community
- Social advocates
- Inquiry
- A place of spiritual inquiry
- Reflection
- Retreat
- Women at Cross Rose
- "Justice through service"

Discussion using stories:
Stories we tell (about out lives, our work, the people we know) are meaning-making, ways we make sense of the world

- Tell us how to behave, what the rules are, who we may be, what the world is like
- Maintain and/or challenge discourses

In pairs:
Tell each other a story about justice or injustice

What meanings?
What discourses come into play?
How else might the story be told?
By whom?
For what purpose?

Appendix 3

Workshop: Empowering women
17 October 2001

Participants: Cross Rose Centre and Link House staff

Venue: Houchen Retreat House

Purposes:

to reflect on the idea of empowering women
to talk about the ways we try to empower women
to meet and support each other.

Questions suggested for reflection before workshop:

1. What are the notions of "woman" around us, in our communities and everyday lives?
2. How do we think of and talk about the women we work with?
3. What are the ways we oppress other women?
4. What are the ways we empower women?

Outline:

Greetings and Welcome (circle dance lead by Paula, Manager of Link House)
Introduction:

how idea came up for workshop
why the word "empowering"
rich with possibilities
open to co-option
used in complex and various ways

But still the reason many of us work with women

Round of introductions
Process discussion

1. Group norms?
2. Setting agenda for day

Some comments before we work together on the agenda

We all come with gifts to offer (mine is years of reading and thinking as a feminist, about way women are thought of and spoken of, are allowed to choose to act - particularly around life and career, as mothers, as paid and unpaid workers...)
We might choose to work in different ways: eg as particular groups... Maori/Pakeha, older/younger, lesbian/heterosexual, counsellors/social workers/managers..., individually, in pairs...
We might also choose to work with many ways of knowing - art, creativity, music, reading, discussion, dance...

My assumptions:

Reflecting on our own practice is worthwhile and creative.
We can inquire together and alone.
We want to be self-conscious about participating in what the idea of 'women' means right now, in this place.

Possibilities:

Dance/movement, drama, case study discussion, discussion of readings, storytelling, critical incidents of empowerment/disempowerment, using a legend, a waiata, a poem, developing a set of significant questions, picking a metaphor and elaborating on it.

Choose what you wish to share with the rest of the group.

Offering from Karen.
Close by Paula.

Appendix 4

Workshop: The community sector: Context for Waikato Anglican Social Services 21 November 2001

Participants: Agency staff and volunteers

Venue: Chapel, Te Ara Hou

Purpose: To give staff more information and encourage thinking and discussion about the political and social context for the Agency.

Outline:

A. Welcome and introduction: discuss purpose of workshop.

B The Community sector

The Agency is located in the "community sector". What do we mean by that?

Notion of 4 sectors - way of talking about where work/tasks/resources belong

First - business
Second - government/state
Third - community
Fourth - family/household/neighbourhood (some include church and school)

The order tells us something about our social values.

The boundaries between these are always blurred and changing:

eg where does the church belong? Where does sex education belong? Note way it has shifted around (home, church, family planning association, schools/government, could it be privatised?)

eg AIDS, birth care, death care, elderly care

Changes in where we believe responsibility lies affect community organisations

DISCUSS: Care of men in Agency accommodation
Care of women in the Centre

How do we define the community sector?

Various names: voluntary sector, community sector, civil sector, not-for-profit sector,
independent sector

What makes an organisation fit in this sector?

Values-based: what kinds of values? Altruism, service, democracy, helping, empowering, environmental, community, care, participation (aim to improve the quality of life of individuals and communities).
Legal structures? Inc. society, Charitable Trust, Charitable Company
Organisational structures: board, volunteers
Independent (?) of government and business, therefore essential for democracy

Kinds of community organisations: welfare, health education, arts, sports, ie. a huge variety.

What kinds of views do we hear in the general public about community organisations?

eg do-gooder, caring people (making a profit is generally considered a virtue in our society).

In the past the community sector has been less visible. Now it is becoming much more visible and articulate and self-reflective.

C. Social policy context in Aotearoa/New Zealand

a) Pre-European settlement: Maori had own highly developed economic system and structures for well-being and care, education etc
b) European colonisation brought British form of capitalism, church, different family structures, different education system, different political system (democracy).

What do we mean by "capitalism"?

1. Primary principle: profit maximisation ie that is the purpose of organising
2. Primary methods: competitive individualism
    - social Darwinism ie there are winners and losers (exclusion). Survival of the fittest is a virtue.
    - in the last 20 years; "market language"

What do we mean by "democracy"?
Principles: participation, involvement, empowerment, equality

New Zealand holds both democratic and capitalist principles: are there contradictions?

1900s:
Church - welfare
Maori - manaakitanga

1950s: government: welfare
Pre 1984:

"Managed economy", tariffs, legislation etc
Welfare state ie welfare is a government responsibility ("from the cradle to the grave"), taxes as re-distribution of resources.

1984-1999 (successive Labour then National governments)

Radical commitment to neo-liberalism ie an extreme form of free trade economics.

New Zealand went the furthest, the fastest in restructuring.

Recipe: open markets, free trade, unfettered capital flows, minimal government intervention which it was argued would improve GDP with "trickle-down" effect for everybody else, privatisation of what we thought were essential public services.

Shift in welfare responsibility to individuals and families (eg community care)

Rejection of social rights.

Managerial principles moved from private sector to public to community sector, focus on strategic management, human resources, marketing, and output categories.
Some effects:
Poverty comes to be seen as an individual choice ie people are poor because that don't make the right choices eg have too many children, squander their money, too lazy to work.
An increasing gap between rich and poor
Economic growth has not been evident
Emphasis on finding solutions within the family, based on the family as a heterosexual couple, 2 parent middle class grouping.
Welfare seen as a public burden ("the undeserving poor"), social justice is a non-issue.

Effects for Community Sector
Some community organisations propelled to mainstream service provision
Extra stresses on families of poverty and community care
More work and more difficult work for social service agencies. People come with long-term, deep-seated and complex issues
Contracting culture emerged: government funding of community organisations. Competition. Accountability. Efficiency and effectiveness
Application of "business" principles: eg the "generic manager", marketing "funder-capture", "mission-drift"
Changes in expectations of volunteers
Increase in voluntary hours by paid staff
People served became consumers or clients

Other significant policy shifts influenced by calls to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the feminist movement.

2000-2001
Labour government elected out of growing concern about social outcomes of last 15 years.
Political concept of "the third way" (following Blair in Britain) ie not welfare state, not neo-liberalism but a third political way.
"Third way" doesn't reject capitalism, but re-evaluates the relationship between state and markets, says good economics demands democratic institutions and politics, sees "globalisation" as inevitable.
The rhetoric places the community sector in a key role in "the Third Way" ie a major contributor to democracy, "civil society" ie participation of everybody. Community sector is seen as having a big contribution to social policy

Part of re-evaluating relationships between sectors and calls for "civil society" has been the work of the **Working party on the relationships between government and community sector** which produced a report in April 2001 after talking with many community groups.
Main Findings:
1. Hugely diverse sector, includes Iwi/Maori organisations
2. Huge mistrust, anger, burnout cynicism about government

Felt economic and social reforms since 1940's had left community groups to pick up vital services from government, but still left them out of the policy-making loop
Unresolved Tiriti issues
Government funding processes and inappropriate accountability measures particularly difficult
Government focus on individuals rather than public good seen as far removed from the community development perspective of many community groups.

3. A willingness to find a new and better way.

Presented a series of recommendations for ongoing work
Renegotiating funding and accountability
Developing participatory democracy
Crown/Iwi relationships
Strengthening the community sector

DISCUSSION: Tell me about the history of the Agency and how it fits into all of this....

D. Current issues in the sector

(Try and give examples from the Agency for each ie ask staff for examples)
Professionalisation
Volunteers
Technology
Contributing to a civil society
Management vs "managerialism"
Funding - philanthropy, funder capture, stability, contracting
Privatisation/commercialisation (more competition between agencies eg James family)
Local government changes
More movement of staff between sectors
Internationalisation
Secular society, while much voluntary work done by church groups
Formalising the sector (legal entities, certificates, credentials, regulations)
Contributing to social policy and social change
Accountability

People in the community sector becoming more reflective and aware.

FINAL DISCUSSION

Appendix 5

Workshop: The Treaty of Waitangi and Waikato
Anglican Social Services
28 November 2001

Introduction

Acknowledge Te Aopehirangi for her earlier seminar on The treaty of Waitangi
Acknowledge the commitment of people in the Anglican Church and this Agency to working in ways which honour both Maori and Pakeha.
Express my hope that this be a safe place for us all to try out ideas.
I don't have answers, but I do think that this kind of discussion is crucial in our country. I dream of this country as a place people can live expressing who they are in well-being and safety through all of the ways that they live.

ASK: What do you remember from the Treaty w/s Te Aopehirangi ran?
Eg 2 versions of the Treaty, 3 or 4 articles, promises, legislation breaking the promises

Some terms: what do we mean by:

Race - biological, physical features
- term used by Europeans to demonstrate inferiority of other races, therefore tainted?

Culture - shared system of values, meanings, ways of behaving etc

Ethnicity - an identity reflecting cultural experiences, feelings and history

Racism - personal and institutional, prejudice + power, presence of negative
attitudes (eg lazy, dirty, not as civilised...)
Institutional Racism: institutions and organisations (eg Government, CYFS, hospitals) and social structures (family, education)
Treatment of groups different because of policies and procedures eg adoption.

Exercise: Timeline for New Zealand 1770 – 2000

Ask people to write down significant dates
Reflect on contributions: whose history does it represent?
Discuss function of history as socialisation
Now to add all dates you can think of which might be important to Maori (Recall dates Te Aopehirangi provided)
Discuss - what we learn and why

Exercise: Map of Aotearoa/ New Zealand

1. Which is up and which is down?
2. Tainui area?
3. History of Waikato site?

Other kinds of difference?

eg leadership
eg behaviour (read example of tapu and noa)

Discuss
Do Pakeha have a culture?
Why do we use the word Pakeha?

Some information about race relations and social policy:

1642	Abel Tasman 'discovered' New Zealand Traders, whalers, sealers Missionaries Waikato: up to 1850's is the golden age of Maori agriculture
1800's	Land speculation by Pakeha British immigration Maori-Pakeha relations worsening: increasing numbers of Pakeha Pakeha introduction of alcohol
1840	Te Tiriti o Waitangi/ The Treaty of Waitangi partnership participation protection
1850's	Development of British government Cede kawanatanga (governorship to Queen), rights as citizens, rights over all their land, villages and treasures but processes of colonisation and urbanisation ongoing.
Up to1960	assimilation is the main policy, "modernisation of a backward people" Pakeha control political economic and institutional systems Monolingualism and monoculturalism
1960's	Government policy is integration but some argue this is really just another name for assimilation, since Maori still the ones expected to change. Myth of harmonious relations beginning to be challenged
1970's & 1980's	Social protest The Treaty becomes one way of discussing Maori/Pakeha relationships.
1975	Maori land march.
1981	Springbok tour
1984	Hikoi (protest march) to Waitangi, led by Eva Rickard
1980's & 1990's	Discussion of bicultural development My own commitments - being willing to learn - making space, stepping aside - understanding who I am - part of all my work Notions of partnership, power sharing, tino rangatiratanga, autonomy, identity, self-determination Te Reo movement Challenges within government departments
1990's	Rights of indigenous peoples Language of 'diversity' "Postcolonialism"

BUT at same time neo-liberal policies strengthening

- based on Western individualism and competition (some people think Maori far more advantaged) and nationalism (very narrow form of nationalism in New Zealand)
- notion of the "free market" tends to deny the relevance of group issues, structural injustice and therefore social justice

At the very same time as government responding to protests of Maori, economic policy worsening the lives of many Maori.
Pakeha values as 'normal' remain, colonisation continues, Western values as superior (Pakeha select which Maori tikanga or values to maintain).

Questions:
What does all of this mean for the Agency?
Is The Treaty significant to the work of the Agency?
How is it related to the work we do?

Puao-te-ata- tu: read sections
Note Appendix especially useful (offer to make copies).

CLOSE: Metaphor of twin-hulled boat/waka.
Make space.
Keep our eyes on the space between.
Educate ourselves.

Appendix 6

Submission to the Justice Commission reviewing the laws about guardianship, custody and access to children

Review of the Laws about Guardianship, Custody and Access

Submission from Waikato Anglican Social Services

Context for this submission

As a social service agency based in the Waikato, we work extensively with parents and their children, for whom custody, access and guardianship issues are overwhelmingly significant. Our work includes social advocacy, counselling, and housing and programmes for women and children rebuilding their lives. We also have programmes for man in regard to violence and sexual offending.

We are pleased to make this submission because we witness often the pain of both parents as they struggle with their situations, and try to come to terms with legal judgements about their ability and right to parent children. We see the outcomes for children. The laws and practising of the law are life changing events. The process and outcomes of legal decisions about custody and access often cause huge pain in peoples' lives, pain which contributes to cycles of abuse, poor parenting, low self-esteem, anger and resentment, addiction, and so on.

We welcome this opportunity to comment on the directions in which the law may change, and applaud the government's intent to revise the law. This is an opportunity for a fresh look.

Our submission is based on our experiences, the reports of our staff and interviews with parents affected by the laws about custody, access and guardianship.

The issues surrounding family and whanau relationships are central to the kind of community we live in. We long for a community in which all are cared for and are safe both physically and emotionally.

Comments on the current legislation and need for change

We concur with comments in the Discussion Paper, regarding the combatant tone and outcomes of the current laws. In our view, the legislation is inherently oppositional and confrontational, and its implementation is often punitive. We note that even the term and process of "mediation" is based on an oppositional stance. Although some of the current mediation process attempts to work in a mutual and cooperative manner, it is tainted by the restraints within the system,

which act to further taint relationships and to make mutuality impossible. The current process builds mistrust and resentment, emotions which further disrupt family relationships.

We have a vision of a set of laws which reflect a desire for cooperative and conciliatory processes that provide opportunities to build positive interaction and creative decision-making which works for parents, carers and children.

We understand that the same calls for change have lead to a significant shift in the laws in England toward mutuality and cooperative decision-making. We suggest the effects of these changes be analysed carefully for their applicability in New Zealand. For example, although we are arguing for mutual decision-making, experiences in England suggest that in just a very few cases, mutuality is not possible and indeed may be risky or dangerous, particularly for women and children. Still we would argue for a legal setting which contributes toward building good relationships for parents and children.

The focus should be on building positive relationships. Safe, responsible and loving parenting is not a matter of individuals, but of relationships between parents and their children. The law needs to provide a context in which such relationships can be maintained and supported.

When couples part

We note that the point at which the law is invoked by parents whose relationship has broken down, is often the point at which opposition is escalated.

We advocate a system where facilitation is provided at the point of separation of parents. The facilitation should be designed to prevent further breakdown, to promote communication and mutual decision-making between parting parents so that the best decision can be made for the children involved. We believe facilitation needs to occur as early as possible and out of the courts for as long as possible.

During the facilitation process, agencies involved may also be able to recommend parenting skills programmes, and other programmes which strengthen parents rather than overwhelm them. Facilitation should normally include the particular wider family groups, or support people, or other family and community groupings appropriate to the ethnicity of the parents. For example, for Maori parents that may involve wider whanau support.

The point at which lawyers become involved on behalf of individual parties, each working to protect the interests of one of the partners, or the children, as often the point at which opposition escalates. We wonder if it is possible, if a case does go beyond facilitation and reach the courts, to have lawyers working for all concerned rather than for individuals. We also doubt that lawyers are the best people to represent the interests of children or family groups, but should be involved only for legal advice, alongside other professional and support workers.

Protection orders

Although protection orders are not specifically discussed in the Discussion Paper, we wish to comment on the way they can be used to gain a 'competitive advantage' in the current win-lose framework, so that the parent who takes out the protection order then has considerable power in arguing for custody of children. We do not wish to deny the necessity of keeping people safe and the role of protection orders, nor to deny that in various instances one partner (usually the woman) must use the protection order process to create a degree of equality in negotiating with a violent and / or dominating partner. However we have also seen protection orders used primarily to gain an advantage in arguing for custody, which subverts their real purpose.

> *There had never been any violence, but a protection order was taken out.*

Changing the win-lose framework, as advocated above, may prevent the misuse of protection orders.

Follow up

As well as early facilitation, we would argue for an ongoing process of follow-up, where a facilitator is again available to enable supportive discussions about the arrangement agreed to. This would need to be carefully managed so that it was not seen as disciplinary or punitive.

Rights and responsibilities of children and parents

Currently there is a great deal of media focus and public talk about the paramount safety of children. We do not in any way condone abusive relationships between children and parents.

However we are concerned that the pain of custody and access arrangements for parents and children is sometimes worse, or creates something worse than situations which bought parents to seek help in the first place, or caused others to seek intervention in a family. Where a parent has been violent to family members, or has been addicted to alcohol or drugs, or lived a lifestyle (such as prostitution) not considered safe for children, there needs to be opportunity for that parent and that family to recover and to build a new way of being. We have watched situations where parents are never allowed to leave behind old ways and to prove that they are now able to be responsible and loving parents.

> *I feel like I can never prove that I am a good mother, no matter what I do, because the goalposts keep shifting. I was told to stay in a violent relationship for the children, so I did, then I was told I couldn't have the children because I was in a violent relationship.*

> *I am not a good mother because I am on a domestic purposes benefit, but then I am not a good mother if I go out to work either.*

Six years ago I was a junkie and a hooker. I left all that behind and really worked to change my life and have proven many times over I can care for my kids. That stuff from six years ago is at the beginning of every affidavit and every CYFS report about me.

We also wish to acknowledge that for some children, a number of people need to be involved as parents. The current framework is closely aligned to the nuclear family, and needs to change to a framework where a variety of arrangements are possible, indeed seen as desirable. Of course this will require further checking of wider family members in situations where there may be any risk of violence or abuse.

We believe that if a community takes care of its parent, then those parents are enabled to care for their children. At a time of separation, parents need caring for, and the law can contribute to that. For example, a single mother with a history of mental illness may need to be supported by other family and professional members of the community to continue to parent well the children she loves dearly and who are hugely important to her wellbeing. Similarly her wellbeing is hugely significant to their wellbeing.

I didn't take any medication because I was worried about my baby getting any through my breast milk. Then I got unwell. It might have been postnatal depression or my old illness. They just raped my baby from my breast and now I am only allowed to see him for a few hours each week. How can we bond? He has to be on a bottle. I am in hell.

The legal system, once invoked, should build around her a supportive set of relationships which set her up to be the parent she is able to be.

There seems to be a belief among some of those implementing access arrangements that children will not be hurt by a number of shifts to different carers, and that it is better for a child to see almost nothing of a parent because any more contact and the child will miss that parent too much.

Thy think it is better for my daughter to only see me once a month because then when she goes back to a carer, she won't miss me too much. They don't see what it is like when she has to leave and knows it will be so long again. And we need time together for when I have custody again.

We notice that access to children is often used punitively against parents, particularly mothers.

Why should I have to give a reason why I want to see my children?

I do not believe in taking children off their mothers because mothers are upset. Mothers do get lonely and upset, especially single mothers. A CYFS worker came around when I was crying one day and threatened to take the children because she said I wasn't coping. I was crying because I desperately needed adult company because I was home all the time caring for my children.

We also notice that thwarting of access arrangements is used by one parent to punish the other.

> *He didn't bring the children down like he was supposed to because he knew it was my birthday and he knew how important it would be to me to see them. The same thing happened last Christmas.*

This makes it even more imperative that joint parenting plans be developed mutually and cooperatively.

Children deserve and have the right to access to two parents. Attachment and bonding, especially in the first year, is imperative for healthy development. We notice that the implementation of the law is often toward one parent and fails to encourage both parents to be actively involved in relationships with their children.

> *It should not have taken four and a half years and $15,000 to get a joint custody arrangement.*

Providing financial support sometimes seems to be considered enough for one parent. We believe it is not a replacement for time and involvement in the child's life. With careful facilitation, more parents could be encouraged to find ways to be responsible and involved parents, ways which do not pit one parent against another.

Conclusion

We seek first a system which expects and allows parents to make good decisions about the care of their children. Such a system should not be grounded in opposition, but in mutuality and cooperation.

Karen Morrison Hume
Director, Waikato Anglican Social Services (WASS)

Bev Gatenby
Researcher, WASS

Jocelyn Fish
Chair, WASS Trust Board

Appendix 7

Report to Board of Waikato Anglican Social Services: 8 December 2001
Report to staff: February 2002

A. Research approach and purposes:
Action research, participation, the wider notion of inquiry and working towards making that part of the ethos of this group of people.
"Critical approach" in that I am interested in social justice and change. And a particular interest in justice for women and for Maori, and in the possibilities for social justice through Christianity.

Working **with** staff in the agency to understand just what a mission for justice through service might mean, how do we try to actually do that, and what things in the social and political context are openings for just action, and what things make it sometimes impossible.

B. Overview of method/ process: emergent!
Discussion of different aspects of the inquiry.
Focus on the workshops and idea of discourses as indicating shifts in thinking.

C. What kinds of topics or issues emerged?

1. Critique of western individualism, particularly neoliberal discourse and social and economic policy, as it is emerging for the social services sector.
2. Related ideas about and critique of the expression of human rights, and particularly the rights of children, in relation to social justice.
3. Also related ideas about psychology and counselling, as a powerful way of knowing and acting which is often used as the way we think we can improve people's lives.
4. Possibilities (and impossibilities) for action as a Christian social service.

D. Questions used in discussion with staff regarding the research:
What has the research been like for you?
How could it have been different? better?
Would you involve a researcher in the Agency again?
Has the research changed you or what you do and think here?

Poem used in report to staff as opening

Please Call Me by My True Names
Thich Nhat Hanh

Do not say that I'll depart tomorrow
because even today I still arrive.

Look deeply: I arrive in every second
to be a bud on a spring branch
to be a tiny bird, with wings still fragile,
learning to sing in my new nest,
to be a caterpillar in the heart of a flower,
to be a jewel hiding itself in a stone.

I still arrive, in order to laugh and to cry,
in order to fear and hope,
the rhythm of my heart is the birth and death
of all that are alive.

I am the mayfly metamorphosing on the
surface of the river,
and I am the bird which, when spring comes,
arrives in time to eat the mayfly.

I am the frog swimming happily in the clear water
of a pond,
and I am the grass snake who, approaching,
in silence, feeds itself on the frog.

I am the child in Uganda, all skin and bones,
my legs as thin as bamboo sticks,
and I am the arms merchant, selling deadly
weapons to Uganda.

I am the twelve-year-old-girl, refugee on a
small boat
who throws herself into the ocean after being
raped by a sea pirate
and I am the pirate, my heart not yet capable
of seeing and loving.

I am a member of the politburo, with plenty
of power in my hands,
and I am the man who has to pay his debt
of blood to my people,
dying slowly in a forced labor camp.

My joy is like spring, so warm it makes
flowers bloom in all walks of life.
My pain is like a river of tears, so full it fills
all four oceans.

Please call me by my true names, so I can hear
all my cries and laughs at once,
so I can see that my joy and my pain are one.

Please call me by my true names, so I can wake
up and so the door of my heart can be left
open, the door of compassion.

Appendix 8

Vision and mission of Waikato Anglican Social Services

I runga i te kï
He aha te mea nui
He tangata, he tangata, he tangata
Nä Koi nei te wero

Kaua e hangai he ture
Pera i te kupenga ika
He here hopu

Engari, me përä i te nekeneke tai hei ärahi

What is most important?
It is people, people, people
We should not create policies that are
like the fishing net
that snares and strangles

but like the surging tide
that uplifts and carries forward

ANGLICAN ACTION
pursuing
"Justice through Service"

VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT

We, as a group, are concerned by social injustices in our society. As an Agency it is our vision to break cycles, to treat the causes as well as the effects, to support people to support themselves and by so doing raise the awareness of our community to the fact that these cycles can and must be broken. We observe in our work that the tangata whenua and Pacific Island people are disproportionately represented among the disadvantaged in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is important therefore, that we are sensitive to, and knowledgeable about, the cultures of these groups, so that we can better respond to their needs by working alongside Tikanga Maori and Tikanga Polynesia.

As a Group we were created by and have been nurtured by the Anglicans of the Waikato Diocese. We acknowledge this historical bond and would seek to retain and strengthen it.

This then is our Vision, which gives rise to our Mission Statement:

- To make a positive difference in the community, collaborating, to challenge social injustice and poverty.

- To offer individuals and families options to enhance their wellbeing.

ANGLICAN ACTION
pursuing
"Justice through Service"

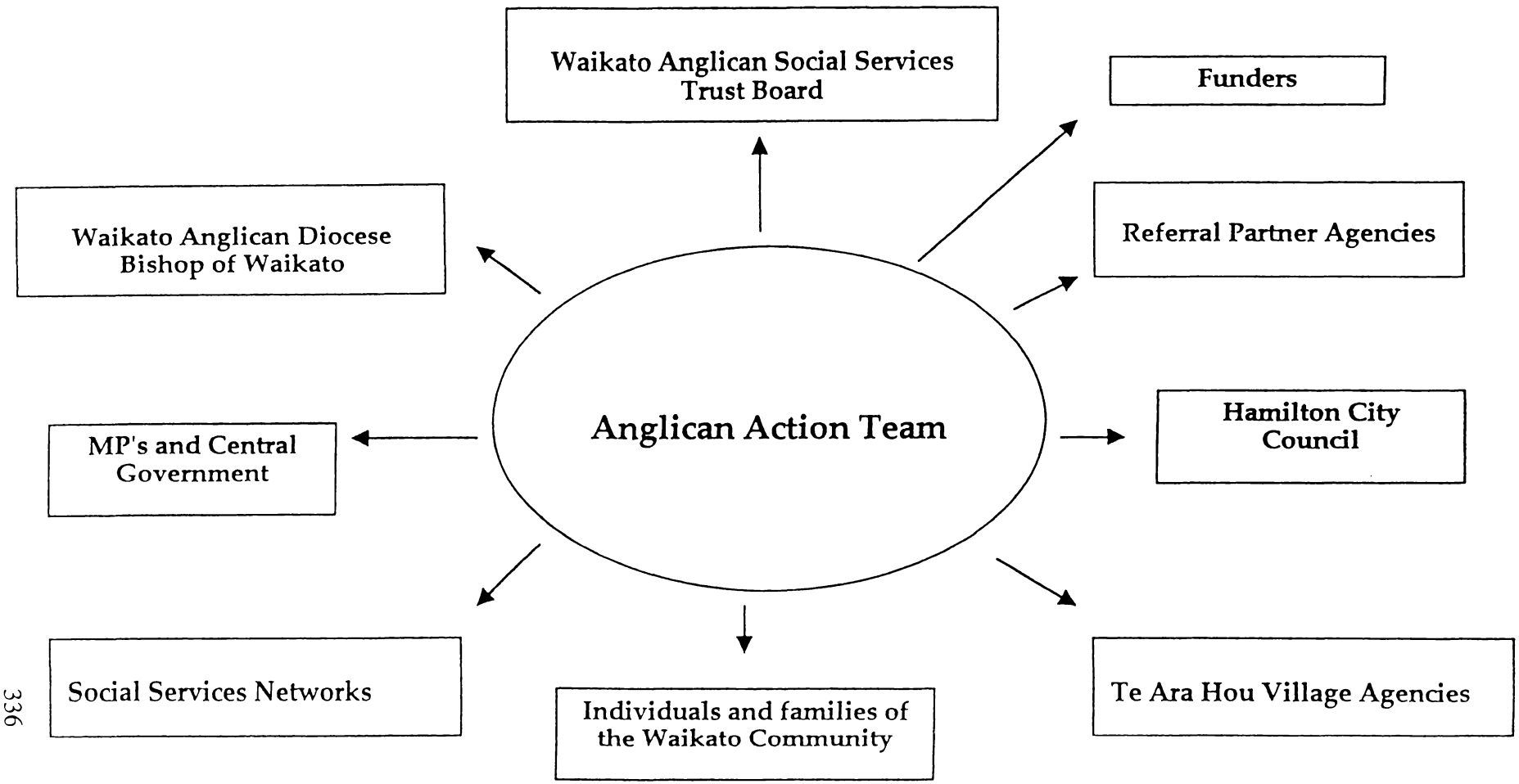
MISSION STATEMENT

- To make a positive difference in the community, collaborating to challenge social injustice and poverty.

- To offer individuals and families options to enhance their wellbeing.

ANGLICAN ACTION

AGENCY RELATIONSHIPS



ANGLICAN ACTION
Justice through Service
A non profit, community based, church social service agency

VALUES STATEMENT

What it means for us to be a non-profit community based organisation that offers social services

Non-profit organisations are a unique form of social organising. We are neither failed businesses nor mini-bureaucracies.

No matter the technical, personal or other qualities of the people involved, *government organisations* carry with them the status of statutory power. This makes it more difficult for people who are disempowered through deprivation, multiple poverty issues and alienation from "the system" to engage with these organisations. In a similar way, no matter how satisfied people are with *commercial organisations* , invariably the question arises whether such an organisation will continue to be concerned about them if their custom is no longer *commercially viable.*

For this reason, if we allow our relationships with the people we serve to be dominated by considerations of power or commercial viability, we will lose the essential value of service.

We cannot ignore the power relationships when we hold resources or control decisions that are important in other people's lives. Nor can we ignore the financial viability of our work, but we are committed to ensuring that the value and practice of service is always preeminent in all our decision-making.

For government organisations, relationships are essentially based on obligation. For commercial organisations, relationships are essentially based on transaction. For non profit organisations, relationships are essentially based on commitment, and this is a commitment to shared values.

This is what makes us unique as a non profit organisation – we come together of our own volition to address a need, to serve, to seek justice and co create a renewed world. It is our commitment to these over-arching values which holds us together and makes us who we are.

It is crucial that we are not only clear and committed to our mission statement and motivated by our values but that we live them out as an organisation. In this way we are able to carry the values and our commitment to our mission from one generation to another. For this reason *processes* (the way we do things) will be as important as *outcomes* (how we end up and what we achieve).

What it means to pursue social justice

Non profit organisations have a wider role in society beyond the actual services or programmes we provide. We are as much about participation as provision, as much about citizenship as service. We are agents of participatory democracy.

We see the relationship with the wider community not only in terms of what can be gained from it but also what can be added into it. Our purpose is to enhance the community by supporting people through challenging structural and systemic injustice which results in multiple poverty traps, deprivation, violence and abuse of people.

It is too simplistic to locate all of the responsibility for change within the individual. It is important that we understand the wider context and external pressures that individuals and families can be oppressed by. If issues of social injustice are not also addressed, individuals will continually blame themselves or be blamed by others for not "managing their lives better" or "coping better". This spirals into a "blame the victim" mentality. Working in the wider picture also prevents the agency from simply acting as an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. We are to build fences at the top to prevent the damage that occurs at the bottom.

Non profit organisations are uniquely located in the social schema in that they can act as catalysts for civic action in response to social injustice and to be the voice from the margins because of their very location there. Unlike government organisations that cannot speak against their employer, or commercial organisations who seek largely to maintain the status quo especially if it is proving to be profitable, non profit organisations are concerned primarily with the wellbeing and liberation of people and can therefore stand without fear of compromise to challenge injustice.

This agency has a primary commitment to the pursuit of social justice. We recognise that justice and injustice are always being created and maintained through social practices. We dream of Aotearoa/New Zealand as a country where all people will be liberated to participate fully in this democratic society, where all voices and experiences will be valued and people are able to live out of the uniqueness of their humanity, where the structural causes of poverty, violence, abuse and discrimination will be addressed and where Maori and Pakeha can truly celebrate their identity as Pacific peoples living in the light of their partnership within the Treaty of Waitangi.

What it means to be a church based agency affiliated to the Anglican church in the Waikato.

The agency was created by the Anglicans of the Waikato. Although it has autonomy through its own Trust Board, it has a direct link to, and intimate relationship with, the Bishop of Waikato and the Anglican community.

The values and principles upon which the agency was created are a direct expression of the Christian gospel as expressed within the Anglican communion. The imperative of this gospel is to pursue justice and offer compasssion through committed service to all people without prejudice. This creates the heartbeat in the agency.

As part of the life of the agency, a eucharist (holy communion) is offered in the chapel each Friday by an Anglican priest for anyone who wishes to partake. A ministry unit has been formed from within the agency, licensed by the Bishop and supported by the Trust Board, to offer sacramental ministry and spiritual support for anyone seeking it at Te Ara Hou.

Three chaplains also support the people within the accommodation services offered in the agency, two are available to the women and children of Cross Rose and one to the men in the accommodation at Victoria Street.

The agency reports annually to the Anglican synod (governing body) and receives support from them through prayer and finance.

We have a deep commitment to this relationship which gave birth to us and continues to nurture us in many ways, seen and unseen.

What it means to be actively working out the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi

The founding document that lies as the cornerstone to this nation is the Treaty of Waitangi. The Treaty provided for the protection of tangata whenua, their lands, ways of living, and cultural treasures under the sovereignty of the Crown.

Throughout our short history as a nation under Crown rule, tangata whenua have been dislocated, oppressed and culturally emasculated by systems formed to engage in the western capitalist pursuit. This could be described as the single greatest injustice our society in Aotearoa must address today. The Treaty of Waitangi is central to our action in bringing about social justice for tangata whenua and therefore all New Zealanders.

As a result of the injustices of the past, and even now perpetuated through capitalist market pursuits, institutional and individual racism, Maori continue to be over represented in the populations that are in prison, in poverty, in poor health, with poor educational outcomes. These statistics can be directly attributed to the history of land confiscation, language and other cultural oppressions suffered by Maori for 150 years.

This agency has a commitment to actively work for social justice in line with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. Consequently, we will :

- *consult* with Maori in policy development within the agency
- *commit* to work in culturally appropriate and safe ways

- *ensure* all staff have a sound understanding and appreciation of the Treaty of Waitangi and are working out of its principles
- *provide* choice for Maori seeking our support by employing both Maori and Pakeha staff.

What it means to be an agency at Te Ara Hou

Te Ara Hou (The New Way) is the site where the vision for a social service village is being lived out. Our agency is one of a number that occupy this site and we have two trustees representing us on the Waikato Christian Social Service Village Trust, the governing body for the buildings owned and occupied by the individual agencies.

As partners on the site with other agencies, we have agreed to work collaboratively wherever possible, sharing resources and working in solidarity around issues that affect the individuals and families we work with. Whilst there will be differences in the way we work or the philosophies we hold, there is a commitment to find ways to come together for the common good.

In this way we model true community, finding unity in diversity, working directly with the principles and values of the Treaty of Waitangi, and providing holistic ways of working, including spirituality.

Te Ara Hou provides us with a unique and wonderful opportunity to continually discover new ways of *being* in community and working out of the experience. This becomes a very authentic way of offering support to people because we are in the experience of struggle and joy with them.

What it means to be a member of the team at Anglican Action

It is important to understand, acknowledge and agree with the values that underpin the agency and inform the mission statement. Values have greater depth and breadth than simple rules and give people room to move and find their place. Rules tend to confine and conform people but are necessary to provide a sense of safety and security.

Within the staff team we endeavour to build an environment that is creative and constructive and at the same time provide clarity through good policies and protocols that ensure wellbeing for all. Woven through policies, protocols, decision making processes and meetings will be the threads of our values which have been articulated throughout this paper.

Another feature of the agency is the commitment to a multi-disciplinary approach which provides support and transparency for both staff and individuals/families. In this way the whole team is responsible to one another and to the outcomes for individuals/families.

We are an agency with a motto "Justice through Service". We are committed to being:

Treaty partners, Christian based, service oriented, justice focussed and community centred.

We will always be an agency in process. We are committed to a spirit of inquiry and reflection about the work we do and the world we are part of and maintain. We welcome researchers who offer us opportunities to reflect thoughtfully on our work in order to actively work for social change.

Our agency, because of its justice focus, will seek to be part of any public debate about justice and injustice through submissions, attendance at conferences, public forums and discussions.

We are constrained by our funding resources but not contained by them. All of our funding is derived through donations and grants and we, along with the many people we serve, live in the light and shadow of poverty. We are called therefore to show even greater responsibility and stewardship for the resources that are gifted to us.

The agency is governed by a Trust Board of committed people who meet monthly to ensure the ongoing viability of the agency and to create policies which support the safety and wellbeing of all staff. They are dedicated to the work and offer their time and expertise voluntarily.

Many people contribute to the life of the agency including volunteers, without whom we could not exist, people in many different networks who contribute to "talking up" our work, paid staff, funders, people who commit to pray for all of us, partners in joint ventures, and of course the people who come seeking support at a particular time in their journey.

We exist for the sake of the common good.

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